Sustainable food systems: Gaining ground globally, overlooked in Czechia?

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Summary

→ Food systems are a major contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation. Strategies to mitigate these impacts include agricultural and land-related policies, dietary changes and reducing food loss and waste. Holistic approaches and multi-faceted policies have the potential to address climate, environmental, health and social objectives simultaneously, rather than siloed strategies that aim to address these issues separately.

→ International efforts are underway to address climate change, biodiversity loss and diet-related health issues through a coordinated transformation of agri-food systems. The first part of this policy brief analyses the role of food systems in the UN negotiations on climate, biodiversity and the Food Systems Coordination Hub (1.1). It also assesses the EU's agri-food policy landscape, commenting on the recent shift from the ambitious Farm to Fork Strategy to the new but short-sighted Vision for Agriculture and Food (1.2).

→ The second part of the policy brief focuses on the national level and reviews existing Czech agri-food policies and strategies in three areas: sustainable food production (2.1), sustainable and healthy diets (2.2) and food waste reduction (2.3). It also provides examples of good practice from abroad.

→ When it comes to food production, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a key decision-making influence for farmers in the Czech Republic. With the Czech agricultural sector largely focused on increasing productivity, this analysis shows that the current Czech CAP Strategic Plan does not sufficiently address environmental issues specific to Czech agriculture, such as increasing soil degradation and erosion risks, or the lack of ambition to reduce emissions.

→ With regard to healthy and sustainable diets and waste reduction, the brief reviews existing and new policies promoting more sustainable consumption. However, it concludes that a more systemic approach, including behavioural change measures, is needed to bring Czech efforts in line with international best practice.

List of abbreviations

CAP	Common agricultural policy
CAP SP	Common agricultural policy Strategic plans
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEE	Central and eastern Europe
COP16	16th session of the United Nations Biodiversity Conference of the Parties
COP27	27th session of the Climate Change Conference of the Parties
COP28	28th session of the Climate Change Conference of the Parties
COP30	30th session of the Climate Change Conference of the Parties
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EAGF	European Agricultural Guarantee Fund
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
EUR	Euros
ESR	Effort Sharing Regulation
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
F2F	Farm to Fork Strategy
FBDGs	Food-based dietary guidelines
GAEC	Good agricultural and environmental conditions
GBF	Global Biodiversity Framework
GHG	Greenhouse gas
IPBES	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
LULUCF	Land use, land use change and forestry
MRD	Ministry of Regional Development
NDCs	Nationally Determined Contributions
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMEs	Small and medium-sized enterprises
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNFCCC	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFSS	UN Food Systems Summit
VAT	Value-added tax
WHO	World Health Organization

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Climate change, pollution, and environmental degradation including biodiversity loss are major factors affecting food systems - the way we produce, process, distribute, use and dispose of food. At the same time, food systems are responsible for one-third of global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.[1] Even if GHG emissions from fossil fuels were halted immediately, current trends in global food systems could still prove decisive in not achieving the 1.5°C goal set under the Paris Agreement.[2] Looking beyond climate impacts, food systems have also been identified as the primary driver of habitat degradation and biodiversity loss.[3] Meanwhile, from a public health perspective, diet-related diseases such as diabetes, obesity and cardiovascular diseases have increased at an alarming rate in Europe,[4] highlighting the need for a shift towards healthier diets. Responding to these interlinked and mutually reinforcing challenges requires a systems-based approach that addresses their range and complexities in a holistic and sustainable manner and coordinates changes both on the production and consumption side. This has been confirmed by the latest IPBES Nexus Assessment, which warns that attempts to address these crises in isolation have so far been unsuccessful and have often exacerbated related problems.[5] Instead, it focuses on synergies in solutions for biodiversity, water availability, food production, human health and climate, making food systems transformation a key step in achieving global sustainability goals. Finally, these efforts must support a just transition both in terms of socio-economic conditions, and of the protection of fundamental rights, taking into account a broad spectrum of potentially affected groups - including farmers, workers in all parts of the food chain, rural communities and consumers.[6]

[1] M. Crippa, E. Solazzo, D. Guizzardi, et al., "Food systems are responsible for a third of global anthropogenic GHG emissions," Nature Food 2, (March 2021). https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-021-00225-9.
[2] Michael A. Clark et al., "Global food system emissions could preclude achieving the 1.5° and 2°C climate change targets," Science 370, no. 6517 (November 2020). https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.aba7357.
[3] Tim G. Benton et al. Food system impacts on biodiversity loss: Three levers for food system transformation in support of nature. London: Chatham House, 2021. https://www.unep.org/resources/publication/food-system-impacts-biodiversity-loss
[4] G. Grosson, M. Di Cesare, "Dietary factors and non-communicable disease risk in Europe: evidence for European nutritional guidelines?," European Journal of Public Health 31, no. 3 (October 2021). https://academic.oup.com/eurpub/article/31/Supplement_3/ckab164.185/6405121.
[5] Pamela D. McElwee, Paula A. Harrison, Tiff L. van Huysen et al., Summary for Policymakers of the Thematic Assessment Report on the Interlinkages among Biodiversity, Water, Food and Health of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. Bonn: IPBES, 2024. https://zenodo.org/records/13850290.
[6] D. Baldock, A. Buckwell, Just transition in the EU agriculture and land use sector. Brussels: Institute for European Environmental Policy, 2021. https://ieep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Just-transition-in-the-EU-agriculture-land-use-sector-IEEP-2022.pdf.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations' (FAO) definition of food systems: *"Food systems encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the production, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food products. A sustainable agri-food system is one that delivers food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised. This means that it is profitable throughout, ensuring economic sustainability, it has broad-based benefits for society, securing social sustainability, and that it has a positive or neutral impact on the natural resource environment, safeguarding the sustainability of the environment".*[7]

In Europe, the share of agri-food systems in total emissions was 32% in 2020.[8] These emissions include farm-gate emissions (with enteric fermentation, agricultural soils and manure management being the major sources), land-use change (deforestation or afforestation - resulting in negative emissions) and pre- and post-production (fertilizers manufacturing, food processing and packaging, retail, transport, household consumption and waste disposal).

In the Czech Republic, agriculture (only farm-gate emissions of food produced in Czechia) accounted for 8.2% of GHG emissions in 2022.[9] There are no studies on the total climate impact of the whole agri-food sector at the national level, encompassing food processing and distribution, food waste, land use and land use change, and indirect emissions associated with imports of food, animal feed and land use for fodder production.[10] A 2018 study points out that production-based accounting (only accounting for production-related emissions that occur in a country) gives a limited picture, as it excludes emissions associated with imported products.[11] Focusing on consumption-based emissions, the study calculated that land-use change, enteric fermentation and manure management are the largest contributors to GHG emissions from Czech diets, and that a significant proportion (over 25% of total Czech diet-related emissions) is sourced from outside the EU - mostly from Latin America, where the expansion of agricultural land for feed production is a major cause of deforestation.[12]

[7] FAO. Sustainable food systems: Concept and framework. Rome: FAO, 2018. https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/b620989c-407b-4caf-a152-f790f55fec71/content.
[8] Giulia Conchedda, Francesco N. Tubiello, Greenhouse gas emissions from agrifood systems. Global, regional and country trends, 2000-2020. Rome: FAO, 2022. https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/121cc613-3d0f-431c-b083-cc2031dd8826/content.
[9] "Emise skleníkových plynů ze zemědělství v ČR - Fakta o klimatu", https://faktaoklimatu.cz/infografiky/emise-cr-zemedelstvi?q=zem%C4%9Bd%C4%9Blstv%C3%AD.
[10] A. Frelih Larsen, A. Riedel, A. Scheid et al. Towards climate friendly and resilient agri-food systems in Central Eastern Europe: the role of agroecological practices, sustainable diets, and holistic policies. Berlin: Ecologic Institute, 2024. https://ieep.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Towards-climate-friendly-and-resilient-agri-food-systems-in-Central-Eastern-Europe-Ecologic-Institute-IEEP-Ricardo-2024.pdf.
[11] Vilma Sandström, Hugo Valin, Tamás Krisztin et al., "The role of trade in the greenhouse gas footprints of EU diets," Global Food Security 19 (December 2018): 48-55. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211912418300361.
[12] Ibid.

Several studies suggest that a large-scale shift to a sustainable agri-food model is a credible and sustainable option to address multiple food, health, climate and environmental challenges.[13] Two dominant responses have been considered as trajectories for the transformation of agri-food systems: agroecology, which aims to maximise the use of ecological processes in the functioning of agro-ecosystems and is based on local farmers' knowledge, and sustainable intensification, which aims to 'do more with less' through more efficient use of inputs and resources, mostly based on technological innovation (Figure 1). Common criticism of agroecology and organic farming is that these models lead to reduced yields, mainly because the production of the same amount of food needs more land.[14] However, this reasoning does not consider a sustainable transformation of the entire food system, including the consumption side. If implemented successfully, such a shift is compatible with producing adequate food quantity and nutrition at a European and global scale, provided that it is part of an overall shift towards reduced livestock numbers and healthier diets, reducing food waste and reducing the area of land used for non-food production.[15] The scientific community agrees that such transformation will not happen if left up to individual choice and the market - instead, it needs to be guided and supported by public policy.[16]

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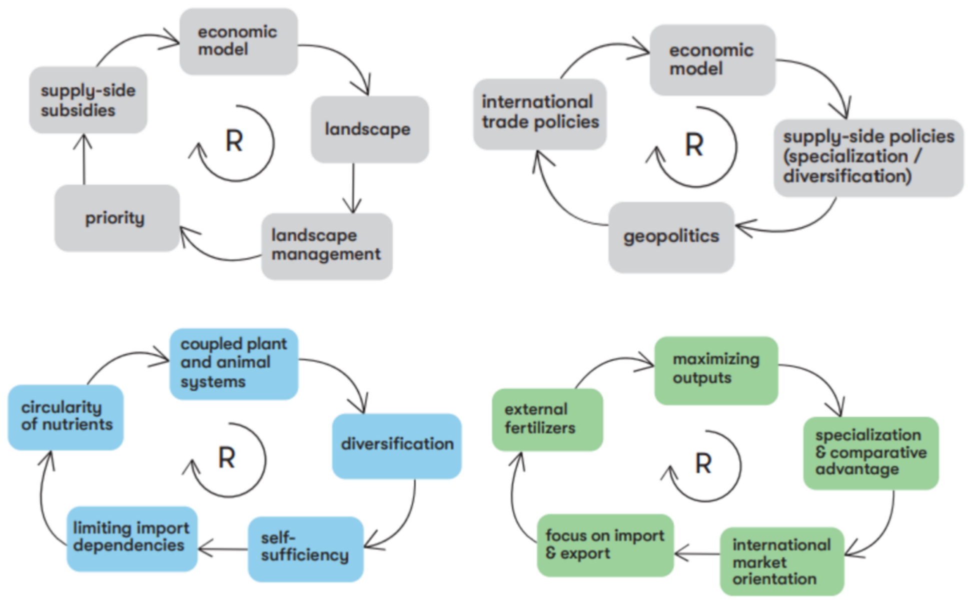
[13] Xavier Poux, Pierre-Marie Aubert, An agroecological Europe in 2050: multifunctional agriculture for healthy eating. Findings from the Ten Years For Agroecology (TYFA) modelling exercise. Paris: Iddri-AScA, 2018
https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/Etude/201809-ST0918EN-tyfa.pdf.; Elin Röös, Andreas Mayer, Adrian Muller et al., "Agroecological practices in combination with healthy diets can help meet EU food system policy targets," Science of The Total Environment 847 (November 2022)
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048969722047106.
[14] Vera Ysabel V. de la Cruz, Tantriani, Weiguo Cheng et al., "Yield gap between organic and conventional farming systems across climate types and sub-types: A meta-analysis," Agricultural Systems 211 (October 2023).
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0308521X23001373.
[15] Xavier Poux, Pierre-Marie Aubert, An agroecological Europe in 2050: multifunctional agriculture for healthy eating. Findings from the Ten Years For Agroecology (TYFA) modelling exercise. Paris: Iddri-AScA, 2018.
https://www.iddri.org/sites/default/files/PDF/Publications/Catalogue%20Iddri/Etude/201809-ST0918EN-tyfa.pdf.
[16] European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation and Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, Towards a sustainable food system – Moving from food as a commodity to food as more of a common good – Independent expert report, Brussels: Publications Office, 2020.
https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/282386.

Figure 1: Two main trajectories of agri-food transformation and their implications for different dimensions of food systems (table) and examples of self-reinforcing dynamics (feedback loops)

Transformation trajectory / Dimensions	AGROECOLOGY	SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION
Approach to nature protection	Land sharing	Land sparing
Stated priority	Ecosystem services	Unit productivity
Economic model	Labour-intensive	Capital-intensive
Supply-side policies	Subsidizing ecosystem services	Subsidizing production
Demand-side policies	Subsidizing sustainable and healthy diets	Consumer prices driven down by the market
Landscape management	Territorial multifunctionality	Territorial specialization
Sourcing of inputs	Circularity of nutrients	External fertilizers
Geopolitics	Self-sufficiency and localization	International markets orientation



Source: Michaela Kožmínová, Ondřej Kolínský[17]

This policy brief is intended to inform a nascent debate on holistic sustainable food systems transformation in the Czech Republic, by providing context and an overview of the existing international commitments, ongoing negotiations and policy processes (1). It explores Czechia's role in the global food system transformation based on the country's specificities and brings examples of good practice from abroad in policies that seek to make food systems more sustainable and environmentally friendly (2), and thus seeks to provide inspiration for Czech policy-makers.

[17] Michaela Kožmínová, Ondřej Kolínský, Trade-offs and lock-ins in agri-food policies. Prague: AMO, 2025.

1 Food systems in international sustainability efforts

International debates on the sustainable transformation of food systems, of particular relevance to the Czech Republic, are ongoing at the UN (1.1) and EU (1.2) levels.

1.1 Food systems in UN negotiations and initiatives

Until recently, the agri-food sector has lagged behind in global climate and biodiversity conservation and sustainable use efforts. In recent years, however, food systems have received increasing recognition as levers of change, especially in relation to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

1.1.1 UN Food System Summit and Coordination Hub

In September 2021, the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) was held as the first major UN event dedicated to food systems, bringing together global leaders, stakeholders and experts to address the need for sustainable and resilient food systems. Since the summit, there have been growing calls for governments to adopt a holistic 'food systems approach' to make progress at the policy level, simultaneously addressing health issues related to unhealthy diets and food insecurity, climate change and biodiversity loss, with coordination to avoid incoherent interventions. Following the summit, the UN Secretary-General established a coordination hub as a coordinating and connecting platform to support countries in advancing their national pathways towards sustainable food systems and achieving the relevant SDGs by 2030. The Secretary-General further committed to convening a global stock-taking meeting every two years to review progress in food systems transformation and its contributions to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. The first Stocktaking moment was held in 2023, and a second one is planned for July 2025.

As part of the UNFSS process, UN Member States have been invited to nominate a high-level government official to convene a series of Member State dialogues, intended to inform the national pathways towards sustainable food systems. While the Czech Republic has appointed a dialogue convener, who organised a dialogue in 2021,[18] it is not clear whether the results have been used to inform a plan to transform the country's food system and how the initiative is continuing. In comparison, many of the participating countries have shared their pathways publicly.[19]

1.1.2 Food systems at the UN climate summits

The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) commits Parties to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and to adapt the sector to its impacts.[20] Although the Paris Agreement recognises the vulnerabilities of food production systems to the adverse impacts of climate change, food systems have long been absent from UN climate summits and negotiations. The COP27 held in Sharm El Sheikh in 2022, adopted a decision on "Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security", aiming to

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[18] National Convenor Deputy Minister Jindrich Fialka, Explore food systems from farmer to consumer: Summary of the national dialogue of the Czech Republic. Food Systems Summit, 2021. https://summitdialogues.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/national_dialog_CZ.pdf.
[19] "Member State Dialogue Convenors and Pathways - United Nations Food Systems Coordination Hub," https://www.unfoodsystemshub.org/member-state-dialogue/dialogues-and-pathways/en.
[20] United Nations, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, 1992. https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-convention/history-of-the-convention/convention-documents.

promote a holistic approach to addressing issues related to agriculture and food security while recognizing that solutions are context-specific.[21] One year later, the COP28 in Dubai was considered a turning point, with a series of breakthroughs at the nexus of food systems, food and nutrition security, agriculture, biodiversity and climate.

In the COP28 Declaration on Sustainable Agriculture, Resilient Food Systems and Climate Action,[22] 159 nations including Czechia committed, for example, to:

- integrate agriculture and food systems into their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), as well as national adaptation and biodiversity plans and long-term climate strategies before the convening of COP30 in 2025,
- revisit and reorient policies and government support towards practices which reduce GHG emissions, bolster resilience and human, animal and ecosystem health, and reduce ecosystem loss and degradation,
- scale up and enhance access to all forms of finance in food systems to adapt and transform the sector to respond to climate change,
- strengthen collaboration among respective ministries - including agriculture, climate, energy, environment, finance, and health - and with diverse stakeholders to achieve these objectives and efforts.

The Declaration stresses that "any path to fully achieving the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement must include agriculture and food systems." Although the declaration is not legally binding, it sends a strong signal. But with only 2.5% of all climate finance going to food systems,[23] scaling up will be crucial.

The importance of food systems was further recognised by the dedication of a full day at COP28 to agriculture and food, and the publication of the FAO's roadmap for transforming food systems to both limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C and to end hunger in line with the SDGs.[24] However, the roadmap has been criticised by scientists for its non-transparent methodology and for omitting the biggest avenue for curbing emissions - the production and consumption of animal-based food.[25]

In comparison, COP29 made little progress on food systems, but more action is expected at COP30. With the next round of NDCs due in 2025, governments will have the impetus to raise their ambitions for sustainable agri-food systems.

1.1.3 Food systems at the UN biodiversity summits

The link between biodiversity and food has also been increasingly recognised in the global negotiations on biological diversity. For instance, agroecology and its focus on agricultural biodiversity is critical to all three pillars of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD): conservation, sustainable use, and equity. The concept of agroecology is also explicitly included as a biodiversity-friendly and innovative approach contributing to resilience and long-term productivity in the text of the

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[21] United Nations, Decision 3/CP.27: Sharm el-Sheikh joint work on implementation of climate action on agriculture and food security, UNFCCC, 2022. https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/cp2022_10a01_adv.pdf#page=16.

[22] United Nations, COP28 UAE Declaration on Resilient Food Systems, Sustainable Agriculture, and Climate Action, UNFCCC, 2023. https://web.archive.org/web/20231212190236/https://www.cop28.com/en/food-and-agriculture.

[23] Global Alliance for the Future of Food, Public Climate Finance for Food Systems Transformation (2024 update). Global Alliance for the Future of Food, 2024. https://futureoffood.org/insights/public-climate-finance-for-food-systems-transformation/

[24] FAO, Achieving SDG 2 without breaching the 1.5 °C threshold: A global roadmap, Part 1 – How agrifood systems transformation through accelerated climate actions will help achieving food security and nutrition, today and tomorrow, In brief. Rome: FAO, 2023. https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/b86cd543-e8ca-4e95-b5d2-06ea6af23842.

[25] C. Verkuijl, J. Dutkiewicz, L. Scherer et al., "FAO's 1.5 °C roadmap for food systems falls short," Nat Food 5 (March 2024): 264-266. https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-024-00950-x.

Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) under Target 10: Enhance Biodiversity and Sustainability in Agriculture, Aquaculture, Fisheries, and Forestry.[26] Yet still it took extensive discussions and negotiations to have this concept incorporated, mainly due to long-standing resistance from industrial agriculture interests and concerns about potential impacts on productivity and economic interests. COP16, which took place in 2024 in Cali, Colombia, was the first biodiversity summit since nations signed the landmark GBF, which aims to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030. As the FAO has recognised in a recent report, meeting many of the targets of the GBF will require a transformation of food systems.[27]

A major outcome of the COP16 was the creation of the Cali Fund to raise money for biodiversity conservation by imposing a (voluntary) tax on the use of genetic information, applying to large companies including agribusinesses. It has been agreed that 50% of the fund will be allocated to Indigenous Peoples and local communities, either directly or through governments, however, the new fund has yet to prove its ability to generate results.[28] Despite this partial victory, COP16 ended in a deadlock over funding issues, so delegates resumed their talks in the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, in February 2025, to agree on outstanding issues. Among the major outcomes of the Rome conference were that the Cali Fund was launched, Parties agreed on a roadmap for the mobilisation of resources to close the biodiversity financing gap, and agreement was reached on the monitoring framework and procedures for the global review of implementation of the GBF at the next COP.[29]

Highlighting the importance of the agri-food sector in global biodiversity efforts, the FAO, together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), is co-leading the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration - calling for a transformation of agrifood systems as an essential step toward achieving the GBF and Sustainable Development Goals.[30] The initiative aims to build political momentum mainly through communication, events and a platform for cooperation, but real action will need to come from governments.

1.2 EU: Farm to Fork to simplification

The European Climate Law sets out the EU's commitment to shift to a climate neutral economy by 2050, with an intermediate target to reduce GHG emissions by at least 55% by 2030. While there are no climate targets focusing on decarbonisation of EU food systems specifically, GHG emissions from agriculture (together with transport, buildings and waste) are covered by the EU Effort Sharing Regulation (ESR), which sets annual targets for each Member State for the period 2021-2030. The Czech Republic's ESR reduction target for 2030 is 26% compared to 2005. However, there is no specific emissions target for agriculture. The unclear objectives and ambitions have been accompanied by uncertainties and the ever-changing vision for the agri-food sector. The fate of the Farm to Fork Strategy is an example of these developments.

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[26] "Target 10 - Convention on Biological Diversity", https://www.cbd.int/gbf/targets/10.
[27] FAO, Delivering on the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework through agrifood systems. Rome: FAO, 2024. https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/b97dad01-b838-4ae8-bb81-a45d43b3e9dd.
[28] "COP16: An important milestone for equity despite major disagreements - IDDRI," https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/blog-post/cop16-important-milestone-equity-despite-major-disagreements.
[29] "COP16: Key outcomes agreed at the resumed UN biodiversity conference in Rome," Carbon Brief, February 28, 2025, https://www.carbonbrief.org/cop16-key-outcomes-agreed-at-the-resumed-un-biodiversity-conference-in-rome/.
[30] "Countries have agreed on outcomes from the UN Biodiversity Conference (CBD COP16). Here's what it means for ecosystem restoration - UN Decade on Restoration," https://www.decadeonrestoration.org/countries-have-agreed-outcomes-un-biodiversity-conference-cbd-cop16-heres-what-it-means-ecosystem.

As part of the European Green Deal, the EC published, in May 2020, the Communication '*A Farm to Fork Strategy*' (F2F), linking ambitions for climate, biodiversity, nutrition and health. To achieve a sustainable food system, the strategy targeted all links in the food chain and aimed for three major shifts - reduced use of synthetic inputs, reduced consumption of animal products and reduced food waste. Adopting a systemic view and setting ambitious environmental targets, F2F was seen as a holistic and innovative new approach to reforming the European food system and keeping it within planetary boundaries, but it has also faced strong opposition and political blockages.

Of the 27 texts that the F2F set to introduce or revise,[31] only a minority have been adopted, with several texts awaiting approval or negotiation, while the draft regulation on the sustainable use of pesticides was simply rejected by the European Parliament. Other texts have not been proposed by the Commission at all, including a legislative framework for sustainable food systems.[32] It is not clear whether the EC in its new composition will proceed with the original plans set out in F2F. Without a formal acknowledgement by the EC, many actors have called the F2F failed or dead.[33]

A major challenge for the strategy has been the polarisation of the debate on agricultural transition and food issues, structured around a dilemma, whether and to what extent we need to protect and restore biodiversity within agricultural landscapes, or focus on the most productive use of agricultural land and leave room for nature elsewhere. The polarisation was exacerbated by the difficulty of discussing the economic implications of the planned transition, whether in terms of agricultural incomes and jobs, food costs or the EU's trade balance. In 2022, Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine raised concerns about global food security (mainly caused by disruptions in global supply chains and not by actual food shortages) and shifted the EU's focus to increasing agricultural production, a goal that was seen as directly at odds with environmental and climate efforts in agriculture. In this light, a combination of pressure from food industry groups, growing farmer protests and opposition from centre-right politicians has led to a prioritisation of yield increases and the derailing of many of F2F's ambitious proposals.

The farmers' protests, which began in December 2023 and increased in intensity throughout spring 2024 across the EU, were a response to a mix of both specifically national and more general pressures. While farmers in Mediterranean countries denounced the Mercosur free market agreement with Latin America, in countries neighbouring Ukraine, protests were directed against the influx of cheap Ukrainian agricultural products. Protesters in different countries mostly agreed on the overall increasing administrative burden or the need to ensure that the prices of their products at least cover the production costs. But there was no common position on the role of environmental ambition in resolving discontent among protesters from different countries and agricultural organisations. Despite that, the EC proposed simplification measures that weakened several basic environmental rules linked to

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[31] European Commission, Annex to the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the Committee of the regions: A Farm to Fork Strategy For a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system. Brussels: European Commission, 2020. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:ea0f9f73-9ab2-11ea-9d2d-01aa75ed71a1.0001.02/DOC_2&format=PDF.

[32] "Legislative framework for sustainable food systems - Legislative Train Schedule," https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/spotlight-JD%2023-24/file-sustainable-eu-food-system.

[33] P.-M. Aubert. The Farm to Fork Strategy: reasons for failure and how to move forward. Paris: IDDRI, 2023. https://www.iddri.org/en/publications-and-events/other-publication/farm-fork-strategy-reasons-failure-and-how-move-forward; Piet Ruig, "Farm-to-fork, to protestors with pitchforks: the death of EU's sustainable food policy," EUobserver, April 29, 2024, https://euobserver.com/green-economy/arf1589b03; Philippa Nuttall, "EU launches 'farmer-centric' food and agriculture vision," Sustainable Views, February 19, 2025, https://www.sustainableviews.com/eu-launches-farmer-centric-food-and-agriculture-vision-0c03c58f/.

the payment of CAP subsidies. These measures included, for example, the removal of the requirement to leave 4% of agricultural land fallow or the possibility for countries to apply derogations to other rules.[34] In contrast to the environmental architecture of the current CAP, which was the result of several years of negotiations and aimed to make the CAP greener than ever, the fast-tracked adoption of the simplification reform has been described by policy experts and civil society as undemocratic and inefficient, or even counterproductive in addressing the real challenges facing farmers.[35]

To depolarise the debate, the EC has shifted its efforts to a Strategic Dialogue on the future of EU agriculture. The final report,[36] agreed by 29 stakeholders representing all sides of the agri-food chain, including farmers' organisations, civil society and industry, provided the following recommendations:

- Target CAP payments towards viability and income and away from area-based payments
- Create an Agricultural Just Transition Fund and a Nature Restoration Fund
- Take a more territorial focus on policy-making to avoid 'one-size-fits-all solutions and tailor sustainability approaches for specific regions
- Incentivise sustainable and healthy diets, including plant-based proteins
- Revise public procurement away from cheapest towards best value options
- Promote locally adapted and peasant farms including via strengthened and new short supply chains.

These recommendations were supposed to inform the new EU Vision for Agriculture and Food,[37] published in February 2025. However, the Vision has been denounced by environmental groups, as it ignores many of the Strategic Dialogue outcomes and fails to propose concrete policy actions to tackle the ongoing climate, biodiversity, and social crises. Backtracking on previously announced plans and ambitions, the Vision does not intend to step up efforts to reduce pesticide and fertiliser use, omits both the Agricultural Just Transition Fund and a Nature Restoration Fund mentioned in the Strategic Dialogue, and pays very little attention to the consumption side of food systems - dropping plans for front-of-pack nutrition labelling, lacking concrete measures to strengthen advertising standards, and completely omitting the environmental and health impacts of the livestock sector.

Against the international context described in the first part of this brief, the second part provides an overview of existing Czech national food policies and strategies, and presents examples of ambitious policies from abroad that aim to make food systems more sustainable.

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[34] "How Has The CAP's Green Architecture Changed Around Europe?," ARC2020, February 24, 2025, https://www.arc2020.eu/how-has-the-caps-green-architecture-changed-around-europe/.
[35] "Will CAP simplification proposals address the real challenges faced? - (IEEP)," https://ieep.eu/news/will-cap-simplification-proposals-address-the-real-challenges-faced/; "CAP revision escalated to EU Ombudsman - BirdLife International," https://www.birdlife.org/news/2024/07/24/press-release-commissions-anti-democratic-cap-revision-escalated-to-eu-ombudsman/.
[36] Peter Strohschneider et al., Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture: A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe. Brussels: Strategic Dialogue on the Future of EU Agriculture, 2024, https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/main-initiatives-strategic-dialogue-future-eu-agriculture_en#strategic-dialogue-report.
[37] European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European economic and social committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Vision for Agriculture and Food. Brussels: European Commission, 2025. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0075.

2 Czech national food policies and examples of good practice from abroad

This part of the brief outlines the building blocks for sustainability transition: sustainable food production (2.1), sustainable and healthy diets (2.2) and reduced food waste (2.3).

2.1 Sustainable food production

Agricultural production in Czechia increasingly faces risks from intense, prolonged droughts, extreme weather events and flooding.[38] In 2024, changing climate was apparent on an alarming number of occasions - from the early arrival of spring and subsequent severe spring frosts which reduced fruit yields by 65% compared to the previous five year average,[39] to a long series of tropical heat waves followed by intense rains and devastating floods in September.

Czechia has an arable sector dominated by wheat, barley and rapeseed grown on 60% of arable land. It also has the largest average area of farms in the EU - 121 ha compared to the EU average of 17 ha, with the largest farms as large as 2000+ ha. The dominance of monoculture cropping, large field sizes and the absence of landscape features further increase vulnerability to droughts and erosion. In fact, in 2024 the Czech erosion monitoring application[40] recorded more than 500 erosion events - the highest number since the monitoring began in 2014. According to experts, this is only a fraction of the actual number of erosion events due to the unsystematic nature of the monitoring and reporting system.

Despite these pressing environmental issues, the current Strategy of the Ministry of Agriculture of the Czech Republic with a view to 2030[41] is dominated by a discourse on the need to increase the competitiveness, productivity and efficiency of Czech agricultural production, as a stated precondition for improved food security and self-sufficiency. A new updated version of the Strategy should be adopted in 2025, but it is unlikely that its focus will be considerably different.[42] This approach focuses on incremental technical improvements in agricultural production-side efficiency, but pays little attention to the need to optimize overall consumption and production levels to ensure long-term food security.[43]

In this context, both mitigation and adaptation measures, as well as policies targeting biodiversity and soil health, should receive more attention in order to make Czech agriculture more resilient, sustainable and in line with healthy diets within planetary boundaries.

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[38] Nicole van Maanen, Emily Theokritoff et al., Climate Impacts in the Czech Republic. Climate Analytics, 2021. https://www.klimazaloba.cz/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/FINAL_impact-profile-Czech-Republic.pdf.
[39] ČTK, "Úroda ovoce v ČR loni kvůli mrazům klesla o 65 procent, byla nejnižší za 100 let," ekolist.cz, January 14, 2025. https://ekolist.cz/cz/zpravodajstvi/zpravy/uroda-ovoce-v-cr-loni-kvuli-mrazum-klesla-o-65-procent-byla-nejnizsi-za-100-let.
[40] "Monitoring eroze zemědělské půdy - VÚMOP," https://me.vumop.cz/app/.
[41] Ministerstvo zemědělství, Strategie resortu Ministerstva zemědělství České republiky s výhledem do roku 2030. Praha: Ministerstvo zemědělství, 2016. https://mze.gov.cz/public/portal/mze/ministerstvo-zemedelstvi/koncepce-a-strategie/strategie-resortu-ministerstva-1.
[42] Jan Drahorád, "Jak mají vypadat zemědělství a venkov po roce 2030? Víc brambor i prasat," idnes.cz, October 19, 2024. https://www.idnes.cz/ekonomika/domaci/zemedelstvi-ministerstvo-strategie-potraviny.A241018_165756_ekonomika_drh.
[43] "What is environmental efficiency? And is it sustainable? - TABLE Debates," https://tabledebates.org/building-blocks/what-environmental-efficiency-and-it-sustainable.

2.1.1 Policies shaping food production: CAP Strategic Plan

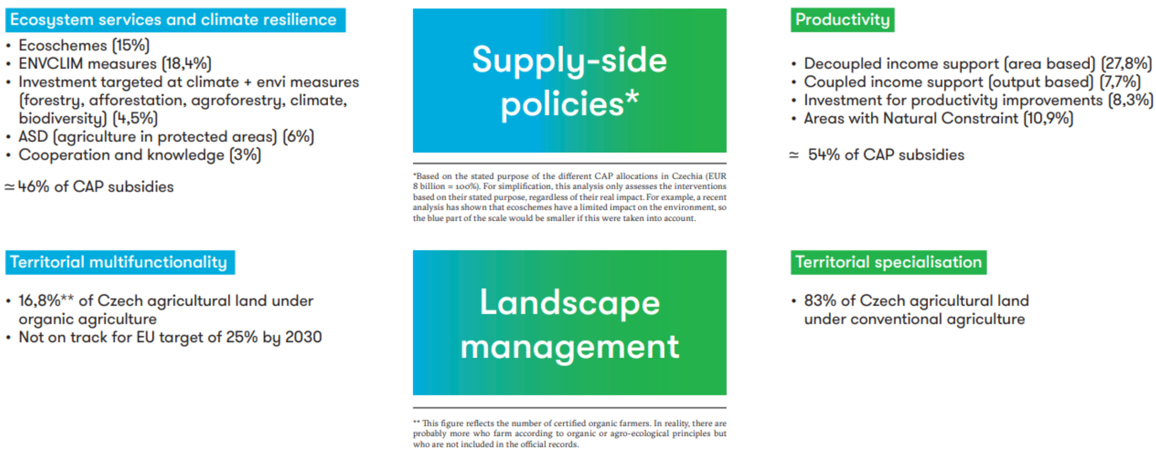
With EUR 8 billion dedicated to Czechia, the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is a key decision-making influence for farmers. The funding comes from the European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

- The EAGF (pillar I) includes coupled (tied to the level of output) and decoupled (independent of the level of output) payments and is mostly used to support farmers' income and young farmers, and to stabilise agricultural markets, with some basic environmental requirements attached (Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions - GAECs). On top of that, EAGF includes eco-schemes - voluntary one-year commitments.
- The EAFRD (pillar II) is mostly used to increase the competitiveness of agriculture together with its environmental performance and broader support to rural areas and communities.

Decoupled income support (or hectare-based income support) makes up around half of the total CAP budget for Czechia. This component has been criticised for weak environmental conditionality, which has been further weakened by derogations, withdrawal, or reduction in requirements for GAEC standards in 2024.

Around 8% of the Czech CAP budget is coupled - it links the receipt of income support payments directly to specific outputs. Out of this budget, almost 60% is used to directly support beef and dairy production, one of the largest sources of agricultural GHG emissions. These payments lack ambitious environmental or animal welfare criteria that would ensure that these payments do not support further intensification of livestock production.

Figure 2: Current agri-food policies implemented in the Czech Republic and shaping the country's agricultural production, with estimated share of support for agro-ecology (blue) or sustainable intensification model (green).



Source: Michaela Kožmínová, Ondřej Kolínský[44]

In addition, several environmental problems, such as soil degradation and erosion, the focus on intensive livestock production and the lack of ambition to reduce emissions, are characteristic of Czech agriculture and are not sufficiently addressed in the current CAP strategic plan.

[44] Michaela Kožmínová, Ondřej Kolínský, Trade-offs and lock-ins in agri-food policies. Prague: AMO, 2025.

a) Soil degradation and erosion

In Czechia, soils are threatened primarily by water and wind erosion, but compaction, loss of organic matter, loss of soil structure, pollution and over-fertilization, as well as loss of biodiversity, are also major concerns. Large-scale monocultures with a small number of interrupting landscape features is a key factor driving land degradation. Poor soil health has many negative impacts, including groundwater pollution, further biodiversity loss and lower productivity of agricultural land.[45] Soil quality and fertility are likely to be a key factor in agricultural production shifts in the coming years and decades, as fertility in traditional agricultural areas declines and climate change pressures, such as drought and heat, increase.[46]

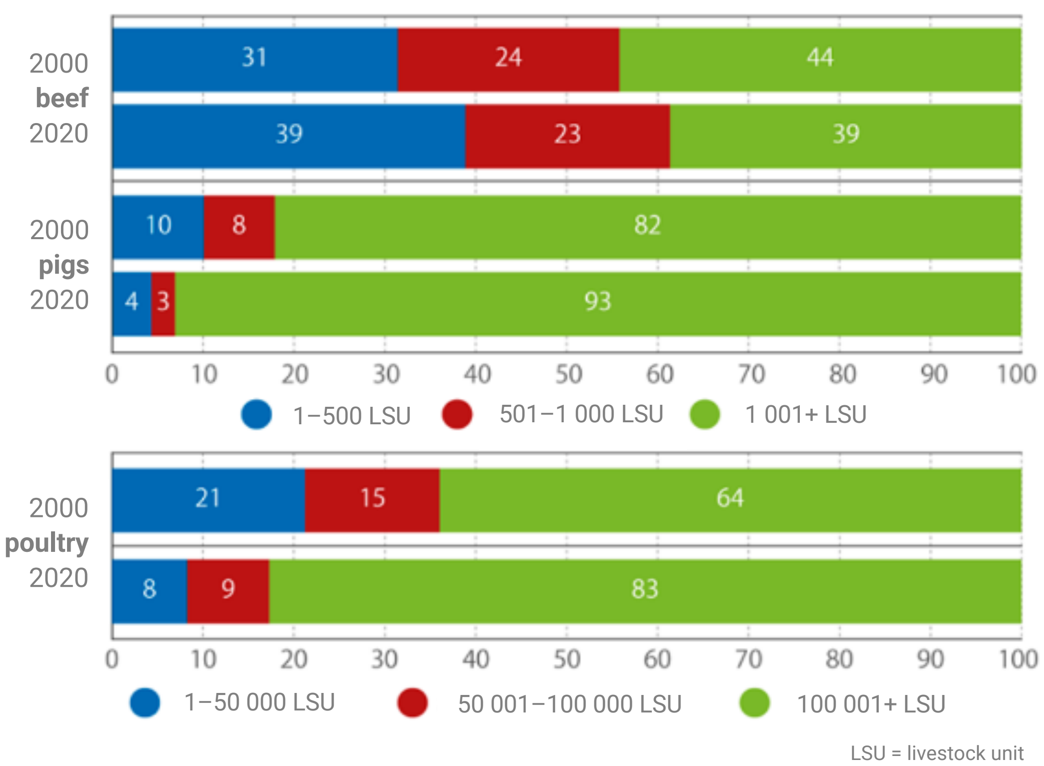
Although an increasing proportion of Czech agricultural land is threatened by erosion and biodiversity loss, measures to prevent further degradation are constantly being watered down or delayed. Following the derogations downgrading GAEC 6, 7 and 8 in the wake of the 2024 farmers' protests, the Czech Ministry of Agriculture has also announced the cancellation of the requirement to set aside landscape features, fallow land, biobelts and other non-productive areas under voluntary eco-schemes. According to the Czech environmental NGO Hnutí Duha, this could result in environmental requirements backsliding to 2016 levels.[47] Meanwhile, new rules on water erosion linked to the GAEC 5 have been repeatedly postponed due to slow implementation preparations by the state, most recently until autumn 2025.[48]

b) Focus on intensive livestock production

In 2020, 69% of Czech livestock was concentrated in megastables - holdings with more than 500 livestock units, compared to the EU average of 31%.[49] Although overall livestock numbers have decreased between 2000 and 2020, the Czech Statistical Office points to a significant trend of declining smaller and medium-sized livestock holdings and increasing numbers of large ones (for all farm animals except for cattle).[50]

[45] D. Zumr, "Agricultural Land Degradation in the Czech Republic," in Impact of Agriculture on Soil Degradation II. The Handbook of Environmental Chemistry, ed. P. Pereira, M. Muñoz-Rojas et al. (Cham: Springer, 2022) 121, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/698_2022_928.
[46] Melanie Katrin Wolf, Martin Wiesmeier, Janna Macholdt, "Importance of soil fertility for climate-resilient cropping systems: The farmer's perspective," Soil Security 13 (December 2023). https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2667006223000369.
[47] "Zemědělci nebudou muset z dotací vytvářet žádné plochy pro přírodu. Rekordní erozi a stále ubývající biodiverzitě navzdory. - Hnutí Duha," https://hnutiduha.cz/aktualne/zemedelci-nebudou-muset-z-dotaci-vytvaret-zadne-plochy-pro-prirodu-rekordni-erozi-stale.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Niels Debonne, Matthias Bürgi, Vasco Diogo et al., "The geography of megatrends affecting European agriculture," Global Environmental Change 75 (July 2022). https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959378022000899?via%3Dihub.
[50] Anna Cábová, Markéta Fiedlerová, "Živočišná výroba se koncentruje," Statistika a my, December 9, 2021, https://statistikaamy.csu.gov.cz/zivocisna-vyroba-se-koncentruje.

Figure 3: Representation of animal size groups in agricultural holdings (%)



Source: Czech Statistical Office[51]

Such an intensive model of specialised livestock production focused on efficiency is often linked to lower animal welfare standards and higher risk of zoonotic diseases.[52]

The Czech Ministry of Agriculture, together with the Agrarian Chamber - the organisation representing large agricultural producers in Czechia, argue that Czech agriculture needs to increase livestock production to improve soil health and farm circularity.[53] However, coupled payments or animal welfare schemes in the CAP do not explicitly target reintegrating livestock into arable systems. They do not include grazing or outdoor access requirements, so the payments are likely to encourage intensive confinement with reliance on imported feed, rather than more extensive grass-based livestock production that could improve soil health and close nutrient cycles at the territorial level.[54]

c) Lack of ambition to reduce emissions

Mitigation activities can be divided into emission reduction activities and carbon sequestration activities. In general, the potential mitigation effect of carbon sequestration in agriculture is much greater than that of reducing emissions of gases such as nitrous oxide and methane. Most of these emissions result from microbial processes in the soil and in livestock and their manure, and are closely linked to production levels, making it difficult to achieve large reductions in these emissions while maintaining production levels. Although the mitigation of climate impacts is

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[51] Ibid.

[52] UN Nutrition, Livestock-derived foods and sustainable healthy diets. Rome: UN Nutrition, 2021. https://www.unnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/Livestock-Paper-EN_WEB.pdf.

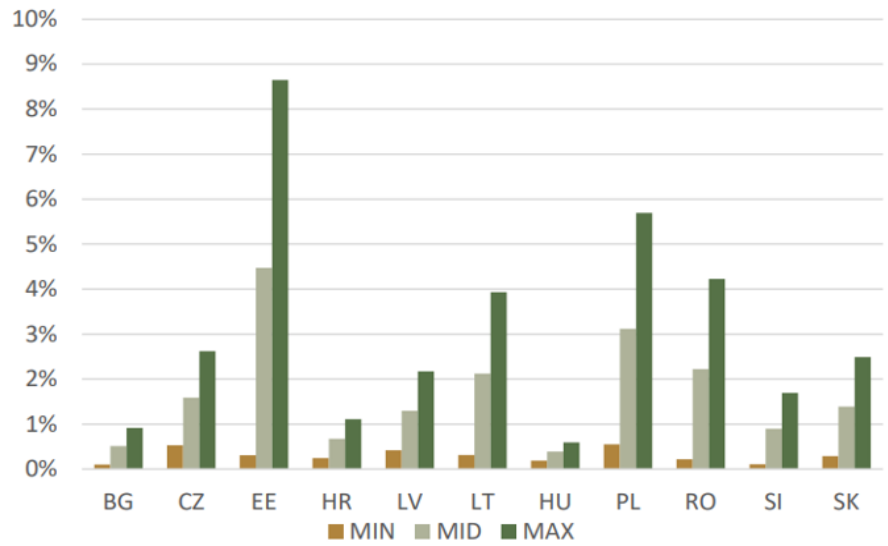
[53] "Význam zemědělství - Žeru maso," https://www.zeru-maso.cz/vyznam-zemedelstvi; Ministerstvo zemědělství, Strategie resortu Ministerstva zemědělství České republiky s výhledem do roku 2030. Praha: Ministerstvo zemědělství, 2016.

[54] Julia Köninger, Emanuele Lugato, Panos Panagos et al., "Manure management and soil biodiversity: Towards more sustainable food systems in the EU," Agricultural Systems 194 (December 2021). https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308521X21002043.

greater by increasing carbon stocks, this way might not be permanent as the increased carbon stored in soil and biomass may be lost if management is not maintained. On the other hand, although it is difficult to make large savings in nitrous oxide and methane emissions, any savings made are long-term.[55]

A recent analysis shows that the Czech CAP Strategic Plan (SP) lacks ambition to permanently reduce emissions in agriculture. The mitigation potential of emission reduction activities listed in the SP accounts for less than 3% of the total mitigation potential, while carbon sequestration accounts for more than 97% of the mitigation potential of the interventions considered in the analysis.[56]

Figure 4: Share of current emissions from agriculture and LULUCF that can be mitigated with selected CAP interventions in CEE countries, via reduced GHG emissions (i.e. excluding additional C sequestration)



Source: A. Frelih Larsen, A. Riedel, A. Scheid et al.[57]

Although the Czech CAP SP largely prioritises sequestration over permanent emission reductions, the Ministry of Agriculture has been rather passive in efforts to propose and implement a conceptual or legislative framework for carbon farming – a business model that rewards farmers for adopting improved land management practices that result in carbon sequestration and/or reduced release of carbon into the atmosphere.[58] Nevertheless, independent initiatives are emerging, mainly in the civil society[59] and business sectors,[60] demonstrating farmers' interest in the matter.

Another study has calculated that Czechia would need to achieve a 55.9% reduction in direct livestock emissions by 2050, if agriculture is to contribute the same emission reductions as other sectors (based on the EU's older and less ambitious GHG reduction target of 80% by 2050).[61] However, livestock emissions are in reality

55 A. Frelih Larsen, A. Riedel, A. Scheid et al., Towards climate friendly and resilient agri-food systems in Central Eastern Europe: the role of agroecological practices, sustainable diets, and holistic policies. Berlin: Ecologic Institute, 2024.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
58 European Commission, COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT: Sustainable carbon cycles - Carbon farming, Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - Sustainable Carbon Cycles. Brussels: European Commission, 2021, 3. https://climate.ec.europa.eu/document/download/d3529f84-0f18-40ee-ab72-124ba786fb5a_en.
59 "Platforma pro regenerativní zemědělství - Regezem," https://www.regezem.cz/.
60 "Carboneg - O nás," https://www.carboneg.com/.
61 A. Buckwell, E. Nadeu, What is the Safe Operating Space for EU Livestock?. Brussels: RISE Foundation, 2018, 102. https://risefoundation.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/2018_RISE_Livestock_Full.pdf.

expected to increase in the coming years, due to the projected increase in the livestock population planned by the Ministry of Agriculture.[62]

Given its significant budget, the CAP can play an important role in redirecting incentives and supporting a just transition towards more sustainable food production. To improve the environmental and climate performance of Czech agriculture, more budget should be allocated to targeted climate and environmental measures, support for agroecology, landscape features and soil health. Payments linked to livestock production should have more ambitious animal welfare requirements and focus on outdoor grazing and the reintroduction of livestock into arable systems.

2.1.2 Example of good practice from abroad: Denmark's ambitious and comprehensive agriculture policy

The Green Tripartite Agreement between the government of Denmark, the environmental community and the agriculture industry, adopted in November 2024, combines regulation and large-scale government funding to address emissions and other environmental impacts of agriculture.

Key measures:[63]

- A livestock emissions tax: A phased introduction (from 2028 to 2035) targeting emissions from livestock, peatlands, liming, and F-gases, ranging from EUR 5/ton CO2e for peatlands to EUR 40/ton CO2e on livestock emissions when fully implemented.
- Green Land Fund: Aimed at setting aside around 15% of agricultural land for afforestation, extensive agriculture, peatland rewetting, and biodiversity enhancement.
- Incentives to reduce nitrogen pollution: Denmark will pay farmers USD 100 per ton to reduce GHG emissions from nitrogen fertilization of farm fields, such as nitrous oxide. It intends to use funds from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.

These new measures complement Denmark's previously announced efforts to increase production and consumption of plant-based food (see the Danish Action Plan for Plant-based Foods[64]) and to reduce food loss and waste.[65]

2.2 Sustainable and healthy diets

Sustainable healthy diets are defined by the FAO and WHO as dietary patterns that promote all dimensions of individuals' health and wellbeing, have low environmental pressure and impact, are accessible, affordable, safe and equitable, and are culturally acceptable.[66]

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[62] Ministerstvo zemědělství, Strategie resortu Ministerstva zemědělství České republiky s výhledem do roku 2030. Praha: Ministerstvo zemědělství, 2016. https://eagri.cz/public/portal/-q264647---bQaIYrPS/strategie-resortu-ministerstva-1.

[63] "Political Agreement Paves the Way for a Greener Denmark - CONCITO," https://concito.dk/en/concito-bloggen/political-agreement-paves-the-way-a-greener-denmark.

[64] Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark, Danish Action Plan for Plant-based Foods. Copenhagen: Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries of Denmark, 2023. https://en.fvm.dk/Media/638484294982868221/Danish-Action-Plan-for-Plant-based-Foods.pdf.

[65] "Denmark's Groundbreaking Agriculture Climate Policy Sets Strong Example for the World - World Resource Institute," https://www.wri.org/insights/denmark-agriculture-climate-policy.

[66] FAO, WHO, Sustainable healthy diets – Guiding principles. Rome: FAO, WHO, 2019. https://openknowledge.fao.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/03bf9cde-6189-4d84-8371-eb939311283f/content.

Regarding environmental impact, shifting to more plant-rich diets is a key pillar of the sustainability transition in agri-food systems due to the high resource and emission intensity associated with animal-based foods. Globally, the production of red meat has become the largest source of methane[67] and while animal products use approximately 83% of the world's farmland, they provide only 18% of our calories.[68] A greater reliance on plant-based foods would relieve pressure to maximise agricultural production (especially with less land being used for growing animal feed) and enable a shift to sustainable agriculture models based on agroecology. According to the European Environment Agency, even a partial diet shift in this direction would reduce water consumption in agriculture and dependency on imported feed.[69]

From the public health perspective, scientific evidence suggests strong associations between meat consumption (especially red and processed meat) and health risks including obesity, cancer or cardiovascular diseases. A recent survey confirmed the frequent unhealthy over-consumption of meat and the lack of vegetables in the Czechs' regular diets.[70] At the same time, the Ministry of Health's Strategic Framework for Health Development in the Czech Republic until 2030 projects that by 2030, 35% of adults will be affected by obesity.[71] Food produced without synthetic inputs has also been shown to be healthier as organic food consumption leads to reduced exposure to pesticide residues. Studies have also found reduced exposure to cadmium and higher levels of antioxidants.[72]

Despite the urgency and evidence for a shift towards more sustainable and healthier diets, many governments, including the Czech one, remain reluctant to take strong action to implement food policies. Typically, when speaking about changes in food consumption, the narrative of 'consumer responsibilization' has placed responsibility for healthy, ethical and sustainable choices in the hands of consumers, based on the assumption that enlightened consumers can make the "right" choice.[73] Recently, however, there has been growing recognition that individual decisions are not made in isolation but are significantly influenced by the contexts in which they are made - including factors like availability and price of certain products, marketing and social norms.[74] Many of these can be addressed by policies that enable and encourage sustainable choices and by policies that target behaviour change. For example, research suggests that behavioural interventions that change the availability, visibility, sequencing or placement of plant- and animal-based products

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[67] L.P. Fesenfeld, T.S. Schmidt, A. Schrode, "Climate Policy for Short- and Long-Lived Pollutants," Nature Climate Change 8, no. 11 (November 2018): 933–936. https://www.nature.com/articles/s41558-018-0328-1#citeas.

[68] J. Poore, T. Nemecek, "Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers," Science 360 (June 2018): 987–992. https://josephpoore.com/Science%20360%206392%20987%20-%20Accepted%20Manuscript.pdf.

[69] European Environment Agency, European Climate Risk Assessment. Copenhagen: EEA, 2024. https://www.eea.europa.eu/en/analysis/publications/european-climate-risk-assessment.

[70] "Evropský průzkum odhalil pět prohřešků Čechů vůči zdravému stravování. Máte je na talíři i vy? - Edenred," https://www.edenred.cz/tiskove-zpravy/evropsky-pruzkum-odhalil-pet-prohresku-cechu-vuci-zdravemu-stravovani-mate-je-na-taliri-i-vy/amp.

[71] Ministerstvo zdravotnictví ČR, ZDRAVÍ 2030: STRATEGICKÝ RÁMEC ROZVOJE PÉČE O ZDRAVÍ V ČESKÉ REPUBLICE DO ROKU 2030. Praha: Ministerstvo zdravotnictví ČR, 2020. https://zdravi2030.mzcr.cz/zdravi-2030-strategicky-ramec.pdf.

[72] M. Barański, D. Średnicka-Tober, N. Volakakis et al., "Higher antioxidant and lower cadmium concentrations and lower incidence of pesticide residues in organically grown crops: a systematic literature review and meta-analyses," British Journal of Nutrition 112, no. 5 (July 2014): 794–811. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0007114514001366.

[73] Markus Giesler, Ela Veresiu, "Creating the Responsible Consumer: Moralistic Governance Regimes and Consumer Subjectivity," Journal of Consumer Research 41, no. 3 (October 2014): 840–857. https://doi.org/10.1086/677842.

[74] European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation and Group of Chief Scientific Advisors, Towards a sustainable food system – Moving from food as a commodity to food as more of a common good – Independent expert report, Brussels: Publications Office, 2020.

in restaurants and cafeterias have led to significant increases in the consumption of plant-based meals.[75]

Another reason for the lack of involvement might be a concern that food policies may cause public backlash by interfering with people's daily lives and culturally accepted diets. To avoid it, ambitious transformative food policies should be carefully designed, strategically combine different types of policies and build on positive feedback loops and tipping points.[76] For example, investing in innovation to improve the taste, quality, affordability, and social acceptance of plant-based proteins is an important early-stage policy intervention. There is also a major role for public procurement in signalling demand and creating incentives, as well as interventions such as national dietary guidelines, regulation in advertising and marketing, or labelling requirements.[77] For example, a recent study found that a reform of value-added taxes on food (especially reducing VAT rates on fruits and vegetables) could have transformative environmental, health and economic benefits in Europe.[78]

Figure 5: Current demand-side food policies implemented in the Czech Republic, with estimated share of support for active promotion of sustainable healthy diets (blue) as opposed to the market-driven food environment (green).

Source: Michaela Kožmínová, Ondřej Kolínský[79]

2.2.1 Czech policies promoting sustainable and healthy diets through responsible procurement

While the Czech adaptation strategy makes several references to the risks of climate change to food security and safety, there is little mention of concrete measures to promote a shift towards sustainable diets, except for a mandatory percentage of organic food in public and school catering (more on this below).[80] Similarly, the Czech Biodiversity Strategy recognises the significant impact of agricultural management on biodiversity, as well as the importance of biodiversity for food production. However, it does not consider any measures that would target a shift to more sustainable diets. Nevertheless, initiatives to promote sustainable and healthy food consumption exist and have recently been growing.

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[75] Fredrik Carlsson, Christina Gravert et al., "The Use of Green Nudges as an Environmental Policy Instrument," Review of Environmental Economics and Policy 15, no. 2 (July 2021): https://doi.org/10.1086/715524; E.E. Garnett, A. Balmford, C. Sandbrook et al., "Impact of increasing vegetarian availability on meal selection and sales in cafeterias," Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U.S.A. 116, no. 42 (September 2019): 20923-20929. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1907207116.

[76] Lukas Paul Fesenfeld, Yixian Sun, "Enabling Positive Tipping Points in Public Support for Food System Transformation: The Case of Meat Consumption", in The Political Economy of Food System Transformation: Pathways to Progress in a Polarized World, ed. Danielle Resnick, Johan Swinnen (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 2023). https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198882121.003.0011.

[77] The Food and Land Use Coalition, Positive Tipping Points for Healthier Diets and Diversified Protein Supply. The Food and Land Use Coalition, 2022. https://www.foodandlandusecoalition.org/knowledge-hub/positive-tipping-points-for-healthier-diets-and-diversified-protein-supply/.

[78] M. Springmann, E. Dinivitzer, F. Freund et al., "A reform of value-added taxes on foods can have health, environmental and economic benefits in Europe," Nat Food 6 (January 2025): 161–169. https://doi.org/10.1038/s43016-024-01097-5.

[79] Michaela Kožmínová, Ondřej Kolínský, Trade-offs and lock-ins in agri-food policies. Prague: AMO, 2025.

[80] Ministerstvo životního prostředí, Národní akční plán adaptace na změnu klimatu. Praha: Ministerstvo životního prostředí, 2021. https://mzp.gov.cz/cz/narodni_akcni_plan_zmena_klimatu

One such initiative is planned in the National Strategy for Public Procurement in the Czech Republic for 2024-2028, prepared by the Ministry of Regional Development (MRD). As part of the strategy, the MRD has committed to developing an action plan for sustainable procurement, including for food purchases. On this basis, public food purchases should be more environmentally friendly and support short supply chains, the competitiveness of SMEs, including micro-enterprises and social farms, and consequently rural development and employment.[81] One concrete measure, due to come into force in 2025, will require a mandatory 5% share of organic food in canteens of public institutions, including hospitals, retirement homes or government offices, with the aim of gradually increasing the percentage. In many European countries, organic food is already the norm in public catering, and some of them go well beyond the new Czech requirement.[82]

Table 1: Share of organic food in public catering in selected EU countries:

Country	Nationwide / city	Share of organic food
Denmark	Nationwide	60%
	Copenhagen	90%
Austria	Nationwide	30%
	Vienna	60%
Sweden	Nationwide	25%
	Malmö	100%
France	Nationwide	50%
	Dordogne	100%
Slovenia	Nationwide	10%

Source: PRO-BIO, Organic Farmers Association

In parallel, the National Institute of Public Health and the Ministry of Education are preparing an amendment to update the 'consumption basket' for school canteens. The new version should better reflect current recommendations of child nutrition experts. According to the information available, the amendment is intended to increase the amount of plant-based meals, increase the proportion of legumes and fish, and reduce the required amount of potatoes. The required share of organic food will probably be 2% of the weight, but would only concern canteens with a certain (higher) number of diners.[83]

One example of an ambitious approach is Charles University. Based on its own sustainable development strategy, the university has introduced the concept of sustainable catering in its canteens.[84] As part of this strategy, the canteens provide a varied menu, including daily vegetarian and vegan options. To ensure that the plant-based meals are nutritionally balanced, specialised training sessions have been organised for the cooks. The strategy also focuses on waste prevention through the use of returnable packaging and composting of biodegradable waste.

[81] "Minimální standardy odpovědného veřejného zadávání - Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj," https://portal-vz.cz/komodity/minimalni-standardy-odpovedneho-verejneho-zadavani/.
[82] MyJsmeBio, "Biopotraviny ve veřejném stravování: Co nás čeká v roce 2025?," DVS.cz, January 22, 2025, https://www.dvs.cz/clanek.asp?id=7013093.
[83] Valentina Podlesná, "Školní jídelny budou po třiceti letech vařit jinak. Méně masa i brambor," Ekonews, November 14, 2024, https://www.ekonews.cz/skolni-jidelny-budou-po-triceti-letech-varit-jinak-mene-masa-i-brambor/.
[84] "Strategie - Udržitelný rozvoj," https://sustain.cuni.cz/SUS-85.html.

2.2.2 Food based dietary guidelines (FBDGs)

National dietary guidelines are intended to establish a basis for public food and nutrition, to promote overall health and prevent chronic diet-related diseases. They have been developed in more than 100 countries worldwide and in all EU member states, and should be regularly updated.[85] The *Sustainable healthy diets – Guiding principles* by FAO and WHO encourage national governments to develop context-specific food policies such as FBDGs, that take into account nutrient recommendations while considering environmental, socio-cultural and economic sustainability.[86]

The official Czech FBDGs, produced by the Ministry of Health, were last updated in 2005, making them extremely out of date.[87] A number of more recent dietary guidelines are available, but none of them has been published or endorsed by national authorities. For instance, the dietary recommendations from 2021, referenced in the EU's FBDGs knowledge hub, were proposed by the Society for Nutrition. These guidelines do not explicitly refer to environmental sustainability or climate impacts and compared to most EU Member States, they do not communicate specific recommended amounts of certain foods. For example, on the EU's FBDGs knowledge hub, Czechia is the only EU country that does not provide an indicative amount of healthy meat consumption in its guidelines.[88]

More detailed recommendations have been developed by the National Institute of Public Health in the form of a nutrition pyramid, which recommends including meatless days in regular diets.[89] Another example of dietary recommendations was developed by the World Wildlife Fund Central and Eastern Europe. Its 'Healthy Plate, Healthy Planet' scenario is guided by the need to reduce emissions from food systems to keep global warming below 1.5°C and halt biodiversity loss associated with food production, while improving the health of the population of Central and Eastern Europe. It recommends a significant increase in the intake of vegetables, fruits and legumes, and a reduction of meat intake from the average Czech diet by more than half.[90] Meanwhile, the Chamber of Agriculture, with the financial support of the Ministry of Agriculture, is campaigning to "defend red meat against the pressure of vegetable imitations" and to promote the consumption of red meat as an essential part of the diet, to be eaten at least 2 or 3 times a week (without any scientific evidence to support this recommendation).[91]

Ultimately, diet remains a personal choice, but clear national guidelines backed by the government would send a strong signal and have the potential to inform or influence food service meal planning, food product development, communication and nutrition education, all of which contribute to the overall environment in which individuals make consumption choices.

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85 Food-Based Dietary Guidelines in Europe: Source Documents - Knowledge for policy," https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/health-promotion-knowledge-gateway/food-based-dietary-guidelines-europe-source-documents-food_en.

86 FAO, WHO, Sustainable healthy diets – Guiding principles. Rome: FAO, WHO, 2019.

87 Ministerstvo zdravotnictví ČR, Výživová doporučení pro obyvatelstvo ČR. Praha, 2005. https://www.nemta.cz/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/v%C3%BD%C5%BEivov%C3%A1-doporu%C4%8Den%C3%AD-pro-obyvatelstvo-%C4%8CR.pdf

88 Food-Based Dietary Guidelines in Europe: Source Documents - Knowledge for policy," https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/health-promotion-knowledge-gateway/food-based-dietary-guidelines-europe-source-documents-food_en.

89 "Potravinová pyramida v praxi - NZIP," https://www.nzip.cz/clanek/5-potravinova-pyramida-v-praxi.

90 Julie Mokrá, Eliška Selinger, Lenka Fryčová, Zdravý talíř, zdravá planeta: Kompas pro udržitelné stravování. Zpráva WWF o udržitelném stravování pro střední Evropu," WWF Střední a východní Evropa, 2024, https://www.wwfcz.org/zdravy-talir-zdrava-planeta/.

91 "Úvod - Žeru maso," https://www.zeru-maso.cz/.

2.2.3 Example of good practice from abroad: Recent updates of national FBDGs reflecting both sustainability and human health

Recently, several EU countries such as Finland, Austria and Germany, updated their FBDGs to reflect both health and environmental impacts.

The Finnish recommendations, developed by the Finnish National Nutrition Advisory Board and published in November 2024, aim to increase the amount of vegetables, berries and fruits, whole grains, legumes, sustainably caught or farmed fish and to reduce red meat, meat products and salt. The guidelines are based on the Nordic dietary recommendations published in 2023, which were prepared on the basis of the latest research on the links between diet, health and the environmental impact of food production and consumption. They introduce a Nordic behaviour change framework aiming for a multifaceted policy approach including taxes, subsidies, public procurement, information campaigns, educational initiatives, nudging instruments and labeling to encourage a shift in dietary behaviour.[92]

Similarly, the 2024 revision of Austria's national food-based dietary guidelines included, for the first time, considerations of environmental and climate impacts in addition to nutritional and health effects. The new recommendations cover diets with and without meat, and both versions have been approved by the National Nutrition Commission. According to the Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety, GHG emissions and land use associated with the recommended diets are reduced by more than 50% compared to average consumption in Austria.[93]

Additionally, a holistic National food strategy is currently being developed by Slovenia and the UK.[94]

2.3 Food waste reduction

In 2022, the world wasted an estimated 1.05 billion tonnes of food in retail, food services and households combined, which amounts to 19% of food available to consumers being wasted.[95] At the EU level, it is estimated that 132 kg of food waste is generated per inhabitant every year, along the food supply chain. More than half of this waste is generated in households, which equates to an average of 72 kg of food wasted each year per consumer.[96] In Czechia, the estimates of food wasted in

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[92] VALTION RAVITSEMUSNEUVOTTELUKUNTA, TERVEYDEN JA HYVINVOINNIN LAITOS, Kestävää terveyttä ruoasta - kansalliset ravitsemussuositukset 2024. Helsinki: Valtion ravitsemusneuvottelukunta ja Terveyden ja hyvinvoinnin laitos, 2024. https://www.julkari.fi/handle/10024/150005; Leneisja Jungsberg, Anna Berlina et al., Policy tools for sustainable and healthy eating: Enabling a food transition in the Nordic countries. Copenhagen: Nordic Council of Ministers, 2024. https://norden.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1843849&dswid=-2972.

[93] Lisa Sturm, Lena Klausmann, Katrin Seper-Nagl et al., Healthy and ecologically sustainable omnivorous and ovo-lacto-vegetarian dietary recommendations for Austria – development process and scientific results. Vienna: AGES – Österreichische Agentur für Gesundheit und Ernährungssicherheit GmbH, 2024. https://www.ages.at/forschung/wissen-aktuell/detail/aktualisierung-und-erarbeitung-der-omnivoren-bzw-ovo-lacto-vegetarischen-ernaehrungsempfehlungen-fuer-oesterreich.

[94] "New National Food Strategy Announced in the UK," https://www.nutrition.org.uk/news/new-national-food-strategy/; Zlatko Fras, Boštjan Jakše, Samo Kreft et al., "The Activities of the Slovenian Strategic Council for Nutrition 2023/24 to Improve the Health of the Slovenian Population and the Sustainability of Food: A Narrative Review," Nutrients 15, no. 20 (October 2023): 4390. https://www.mdpi.com/2072-6643/15/20/4390.

[95] United Nations Environment Programme, Food Waste Index Report 2024. Think Eat Save: Tracking Progress to Halve Global Food Waste. Nairobi: UNEP, 2024. https://wedocs.unep.org/20.500.11822/45230.

[96] "Food waste and food waste prevention - estimates - Statistics Explained," https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Food_waste_and_food_waste_prevention_-_estimates.

households range from 37.4 kg to 69.5 kg per person per year.[97] Apart from some differences in methodology, it is not entirely clear why the results in the Czech Republic are so much lower.[98] Although it remains difficult to monitor the actual amount of food waste, it is clear that an integrated, holistic approach across every stage of the food supply chain is needed to tackle food loss and waste. With most food waste generated in households, this chapter will mainly focus on policies targeting food waste reduction at this stage.

Campaigns to change consumer behaviour are a key strategy for reducing household food waste, as evidence shows that awareness of the issue alone does not lead to a reduction in food waste. For example, a survey conducted in the framework of the EU Refresh project in four EU countries, showed that households which buy less on impulse, have a good overview of the food that is in stock, cook precisely, and use leftovers, report less food waste. On the other hand, the extent to which consumers are aware of the consequences of food waste does not seem to influence the amount of household food waste.[99] Strategies to shape consumer behaviour should be based on research into underlying causes of food waste and possible solutions, and encompass diverse approaches such as social norm campaigns, skill-building initiatives, feedback mechanisms or nudging.[100]

2.3.1 Czech food waste policies

The ongoing revision of the EU waste framework directive is set to introduce binding food waste reduction targets at national levels. By the end of 2030, EU countries should reduce food waste by 10% in processing and manufacturing, and by 30% jointly at retail and consumption levels (restaurants, food services and households), compared to the amounts generated in 2020.[101]

The topic of food waste is addressed in the Circular Czechia 2040 Action Plan for the 2022-2027 period.[102] It highlights the importance of measures ranging from awareness and education campaigns on the issue, to supporting food banks or promoting composting as a sustainable way to dispose of leftover food. Although the issue of food waste is mentioned as part of several other activities (esp. 8.2 'Education of children, pupils, students in the field of circular economy'), the activity 'Supporting food waste prevention' (3.1) is limited to the specific tasks 'Support food bank projects' and 'Analyse conditions for donating food from restaurants and canteens to facilitate its use'.

Donations to food banks are also mandated by the Food and Tobacco Products Act, which requires operators of food businesses with a sales area of more than 400 square metres to donate food that is still safe for human consumption to food

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97 Lea Kubíčková, Lucie Veselá, Marcela Kormaňáková, "Food Waste Behaviour at the Consumer Level: Pilot Study on Czech Private Households," Sustainability 13, no. 20 (October 2021): 11311. https://doi.org/10.3390/su132011311; "Plýtvání potravinami - MZe," https://mze.gov.cz/public/portal/mze/potraviny/plytvani-potravinami.
98 Petr Jehlička, "The mystery of the missing food waste," CESCAME, March 14, 2022, https://cescame.soc.cas.cz/research-outcomes/petr-jehlicka-the-mystery-of-the-missing-food-waste.
99 S. Wunder, E. van Herpen, K. Bygrave et al., REFRESH Final Results Brochure. REFRESH, 2020. https://eu-refresh.org/refresh-final-results-brochure.html.
100 A. Frelih Larsen, A. Riedel, A. Scheid et al., Towards climate friendly and resilient agri-food systems in Central Eastern Europe: the role of agroecological practices, sustainable diets, and holistic policies. Berlin: Ecologic Institute, 2024.
101 "Revision of the EU waste framework directive - textiles and food waste - Legislative Train Schedule," https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/theme-sustaining-our-quality-of-life-food-security-water-and-nature/file-revision-of-the-eu-waste-framework.
102 Ministerstvo životního prostředí, Akční plán Cirkulární Česko 2040 pro období 2022-2027. Praha: MŽP, 2022.https://www.mzp.cz/cz/cirkularni_cesko.

banks.[103] Only recently, it was made possible for school canteens to donate unused food to those in need.[104]

Although the redirection of food waste to those in need is an important part of the solution, such focus on incentivising donations has the potential to prevent food waste mainly at the retail and food services level, rather than at the household level, where most food waste is generated. In addition, there are potential trade-offs between supporting food banks and healthy diets in food aid, as incentivising donations funded by public expenditure may perpetuate a system in which low quality and/or low diversity production surpluses are reused in the food aid system.[105] If food waste was prevented in the first place, such expenditure could be better targeted to directly support sustainable and healthy food options for people in need.

The existing approach to food waste lacks systemic measures focusing on food waste prevention at household level through consumer behaviour change. Similar to sustainable food consumption, initiatives that go beyond the government's efforts exist, mainly driven by civil society, academia and businesses, but remain fragmented.

One such initiative is led by Zachraň jídlo (Save the food), covering waste at all stages of the food supply chain. Besides awareness raising campaigns, the organisation also provides practical tips for households, restaurants and agricultural producers on how food waste at each stage can be prevented (for example through sharing recipes from leftover food, frequent stock checks and flexible offers in restaurants, or pressure on supermarket chains to relax aesthetic criteria on fruits and vegetables).[106]

Another one, the Food Waste Institute based at Mendel University, has convened representatives of retail chains to map their actions and strategies to reduce household food waste. According to the Institute, the point of sale could become a relevant communication channel for tips on how consumers can change their shopping behaviour to reduce food waste.

Regarding food waste management, the Institute for Circular Economy (INCIEN) also identified systemic barriers to sustainable kitchen waste processing, including insufficient waste management infrastructure, restrictive legislation regarding waste management fees or a high financial cost of establishing a unified system for sorting and collecting kitchen waste.[107]

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[103] "Plýtvání potravinami - MZe," https://mze.gov.cz/public/portal/mze/potraviny/plytvani-potravinami.
[104] "Školní jídelny mohou nově darovat nevydané obědy potřebným - Zachraň jídlo," https://zachranjidlo.cz/blog/skolni-jidelny-mohou-nove-darovat-nevydane-obedy-potrebnym/.
[105] C. Burgaz, I. Van-Dam, K. Garton, et al., "Which government policies to create sustainable food systems have the potential to simultaneously address undernutrition, obesity and environmental sustainability?," Global Health 20, no. 56 (2024). https://doi.org/10.1186/s12992-024-01060-w.
[106] "Zachraň jídlo," https://zachranjidlo.cz/.
[107] Jana Vítková, Nina Hromádková, Tadeáš Rulík, Circular Food Futures. Research Brief: Barriers, Opportunities and Best Practices from Norway and Czechia. Prague: INCIEN, 2024. https://incien.org/cirkularnejsi-potravinove-systemy-dostavaji-konkretni-podobu-incien-mapuje-situaci/.

2.3.2 Example of good practice from abroad: Ambitious national food waste prevention strategies

Several EU member states, including the Netherlands, France and Germany, have developed evidence-based national food waste prevention strategies and established governance structures bringing together relevant stakeholders.

The Dutch approach consists of five steps:

1. **Creating a scientific framework** to identify priorities based on monitoring food waste in households by conducting sorting analyses and consumer surveys. This is followed by identifying knowledge gaps, intended to be filled with targeted research on specific factors (for example surveys on bread waste). These steps are accompanied by behavioural insights from scientific literature and grey literature on effective interventions.
2. **Focus on high-impact strategies** - based on the scientific framework, annual plans set priorities which are likely to have the greatest impact in terms of the amount of food waste, the environmental impact and opportunities to change consumer behaviour. Different outcomes are considered, such as informing, motivating or activating the target groups.
3. In the **intervention design** phase, collected insights from the framework and the chosen focus are translated into practical interventions, such as a campaign or a tool.
4. **Joint implementation** encompassing a large network of retailers, food producers, food services, schools, local and national organizations and municipalities.
5. The final step is to **evaluate** the reach, appreciation, areas for improvement and the effect of food waste reduction interventions. Interventions are evaluated via online consumer surveys, food waste questionnaires, one-on-one interviews or media coverage figures.

Concrete examples of successful interventions include kitchen tools that make it easier for people to waste less, such as measuring cups to cook the right amount of pasta or rice, fridge stickers to help store fruit and vegetables in the best place, shopping lists or leftover recipes. Another intervention was an online tool that gives advice on how best to store different products after opening, how to interpret date labels and how to recognise spoilage by looking, smelling and tasting. Other examples can be found in the publication *Building blocks of the Dutch approach on household food waste prevention.*[108]

[108] Netherlands Nutrition Centre, Building blocks of the Dutch approach on household food waste prevention. The Hague: Netherlands Nutrition Centre, 2024. https://mobiel.voedingscentrum.nl/Assets/Uploads/voedingscentrum/Documents/Professionals/Pers/Persmappen/Verspilling%202024/Building%20blocks%20Dutch%20approach%20consumer%20food%20waste%20prevention.pdf.

Conclusion

The transformation of food systems is an urgent and multifaceted challenge that requires coordinated efforts at international, regional and national levels, but it also represents a significant opportunity to promote sustainability in different sectors. International initiatives, including the UN negotiations, recognise the need for systemic change, but the Czech Republic still needs to catch up with international best practice in addressing food system sustainability.

At the global level, the UN Food Systems Summit and Coordination Hub, along with the inclusion of food systems in UN climate and biodiversity COPs, highlight a growing recognition of the need for a holistic transformation. The EU's agri-food policy framework has also evolved, initially through the ambitious Farm to Fork Strategy, though recent policy shifts indicate a dilution of these ambitions in favour of short-term economic concerns.

Analysis of Czech food policy reveals gaps in ambition, implementation and cross-sectoral coordination. While the CAP plays a central role in shaping food production, the current Czech CAP strategic plan does not adequately address environmental concerns such as soil degradation, erosion and emission reductions from agriculture. Moreover, national policies aimed at preventing erosion or enhancing landscape features are constantly being delayed or weakened. The Czech agricultural sector remains largely focused on productivity gains rather than long-term sustainability and the provision of healthy and affordable food, which is at odds with the need for a just and environmentally responsible transition.

On the consumption side, the Czech Republic has taken steps to promote sustainable and healthy diets through new procurement policies. However, efforts remain limited in driving meaningful behavioural change. A systemic approach that includes economic incentives, education, regulatory measures and nudging could result in transformative environmental, health and economic benefits. Similarly, when it comes to food waste, there are policies that focus on reducing food loss and waste through the donation of unused food. While this is an important part of the solution, systemic policies that drive behavioural change are needed to address household food waste generation, the largest contributor to food waste.

Drawing on successful international examples, Czech policymakers should adopt a more integrated and ambitious approach that addresses food production, consumption, and waste in a coordinated way. Ultimately, achieving a sustainable and resilient food system in Czechia will require a long-term vision, cross-sector collaboration and moving beyond incremental improvements to a transformative approach that balances climate, environmental, health and socio-economic goals.

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