

ROADMAP

Roadmaps aim to inform citizens and stakeholders about the Commission's work in order to allow them to provide feedback and to participate effectively in future consultation activities. Citizens and stakeholders are in particular invited to provide views on the Commission's understanding of the problem and possible solutions and to make available any relevant information that they may have.

TITLE OF THE INITIATIVE	Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security
LEAD DG – RESPONSIBLE UNIT	DG AGRI – G.1 & C.2 DG SANTE – G.4 & D.1 DG MARE – A.2
LIKELY TYPE OF INITIATIVE	Communication accompanied, if necessary, by appropriate Commission decisions
INDICATIVE PLANNING	Q4 2021
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	-

This Roadmap is provided for information purposes only and its content might change. It does not prejudice the final decision of the Commission on whether this initiative will be pursued or on its final content. All elements of the initiative described by the Roadmap, including its timing, are subject to change.

A. Context, Problem definition and Subsidiarity Check

Context

A sustainable food system must ensure sufficient and varied supply of safe, healthy and nutritious, affordable and sustainable food to people at all times, not least in times of crisis. The recent COVID-19 crisis showed that the EU's food supply chain responded well: food supplies continued to be available throughout the crisis thanks to farmers, fishers, aquaculture producers and other actors of the food chain. However, in the initial stages of the COVID-19 crisis, there were some issues that affected the normal functioning of the EU's food supply chain and threatened food security, such as border controls slowing down the free movement of people and goods and restricting the ability of the single market to operate fully to the benefit of consumers, or market disruptions due to the severe reduction of the demand for some products.

The [Farm to Fork Strategy](#), part of the [European Green Deal](#), envisages the development of a contingency plan by the Commission, to be activated when there is a crisis that affects the entire or part of the food system in the EU and puts food security within the EU in danger. The contingency plan will include the creation of a coordinated crises preparedness and response mechanism. The Commission will draw on lessons learned from past crises, including the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic in developing the contingency plan. The Commission will coordinate this response, with the involvement of Member States.

The Farm to Fork Strategy also commits the Commission to present a proposal for a legislative framework for sustainable food systems. In preparing this framework the Commission will consider, among others, more comprehensive options to strengthen the resilience of food systems and the system's ability to respond to crises threatening food security. For this separate but related initiative an impact assessment will be carried out.

Problem the initiative aims to tackle

The ongoing COVID-19 health crisis shows that the EU's food supply chain is resilient to large-scale disruption, and that the baseline conditions to deal with crises are solid. The Common Agricultural and Common Fisheries Policies, and other EU policies relevant for food and input security, are instrumental here, allowing farmers aquaculture producers and fishers, processors, traders and retailers to make good quality, affordable food available to the citizens, as well as input (including feed) providers to maintain supplies.

However, while the EU's food supply chain was overall resilient, some specific sectors, products, and groups of workers suffered from higher levels of pressure from the crisis. Sectors came under pressure due to staff shortages, be it due to confinement measures, lack of access to cross-border or seasonal workers, restrictions on workplace conditions, or COVID-19 outbreaks (in particular in some processing plants), as well as challenges in production storage (e.g. aquaculture). Pressure came also from the almost overnight disappearance of large sections of key demand sources for these sectors or products, in particular from restaurants, hotels, and catering, as well as to mobility restrictions and to new sanitary requirements. Food waste has in some cases also increased, due to hampered supply chain efficiency along the food supply chain.

The Commission reacted swiftly to address these issues as they arose. Still, the situation highlighted the need for better preparedness at EU level, and the potential for coordination, a common understanding of issues to be set up in advance of crises, as well as coherent response mechanisms, instead of when crises have already started. In addition, future crises may be significantly different in nature, and give rise to further issues beyond those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

There is currently insufficient established coordination mechanism at EU level that cuts across all relevant policy areas and can organise the concerted response to crises affecting food supply and food security in the EU (including inputs to producers). This potentially affects the effectiveness, coherence and timeliness of the response to crises both at EU and at Member State level, and amplifies their negative impact on EU citizens. It also puts at risk the livelihoods of people employed in the food supply chain and has consequences for food security. The trust of EU consumers in the EU food system may be jeopardised due to reduced effectiveness in food safety control mechanisms and guidelines (e.g. reduced official controls or 'own checks' as regards compliance with food and feed safety requirements).

Different types of political, economic, environmental or health crises have the potential to disrupt food systems. 'Go-it-alone' responses by Member States can worsen the problem of supply chain disruption at the EU level, can destabilise markets, and would not be in line with the single market and EU policies. A lack of timely and accurate information and expertise concerning markets can lead to suboptimal policy responses, in times where the need for quick and effective action is most pressing. With increasing international travelling and trade, global political uncertainty, climate change, deforestation, drought and desertification, and technological risks, the frequency and magnitude of crises is likely to increase in the future.

Basis for EU intervention (legal basis and subsidiarity check)

The contingency plan is in line with the fundamental objectives of Article 39 TFEU, in particular to assure supplies of agri-food, fisheries and aquaculture products and to assure that these supplies continue to reach consumers at reasonable prices.

The contingency plan will consist of a set of procedures to be put in place in times of crises. It would include the creation of a mechanism for coordination of Member State and Commission actions to prepare for and respond to crises. Such coordination is best achieved at EU level. Member States' acting alone can lead to actions that have negative effects on other Member States and on the operation of the EU's food supply chain, including the single market and international trade. Member States will be involved in the design and setting up of this non-binding mechanism.

B. What does the initiative aim to achieve and how

The objective of the **Contingency Plan** is to **ensure food supply and food security across the EU in times of crises**. This Plan will contain a set of procedures to be followed in times of crises, and include the development of a **common EU food crisis response mechanism**, coordinated by the Commission and involving Member States. The plan will cover different food system-related sectors that may be affected by a crisis (including agriculture, fisheries and aquaculture, food safety, workforce, health and transport issues). The EU food crisis response mechanism should be consistent with the overall objective of the Farm to Fork Strategy, namely to pursue increased environmental, economic and social sustainability.

To achieve coordination at EU level, the mechanism would take the form of a permanent forum, created by the Commission and in which Member States and, possibly, food supply chain stakeholders would be represented. It will build on existing coordination processes and in the event of an actual crisis would convene and serve as the main operational mechanism for coordinating a response.

The Commission considers that an effective EU food crisis preparedness and response mechanism should:

- have a focus on coordinated action and dialogue to support policy consistency across the Union,
- be a space for the exchange of best practices and lessons learned,
- use a solid and up-to-date evidence basis, including by reference to existing EU and international monitoring bodies and instruments,
- continuously evaluate threats and risks to the EU's food system,
- engage with international partners and organisations, and
- offer transparent communication to stakeholders and the public.

A set of **broad guidelines** and **recommendations** to improve coordination at EU and Member State level on how better to monitor and respond to crises affecting the EU's food supply and food security, will be developed informed by the outcomes of the work of the forum. The forum would promote **non-binding agreements** on how to respond rapidly and in a coordinated manner in times of crises affecting the food system.

The contingency plan's focus is on creating a coordinated response mechanism and a procedure to prevent and

tackle crises affecting food supply and food security in the EU. Crises affecting regions outside the EU are outside the scope of this initiative, as they are addressed in other frameworks (such as humanitarian aid and development policy, G20 initiatives, etc.).

C. Better regulation

Consultation of citizens and stakeholders

The consultation will invite a wide range of stakeholders to provide feedback on the form, nature and scope the contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security should take, in line with the Farm to Fork Strategy. Member States will also be invited to contribute to the design of the contingency plan. The consultation on the contingency plan will also cover the coordination mechanism and forum, with a view to maximise its beneficial impact and effectiveness in the event of a crisis affecting the EU's food system.

The following stakeholders will be consulted: operators in the food supply chain (producers, fishers, traders, processors, distributors, retailers, food service providers) and their associations; other stakeholders with an interest in food supply chain operation (input providers, transport operators, insurers, etc.); consumers and consumer groups; civil society organisations; Member States' representatives and competent authorities; international organisations and third countries; and the scientific community and policy support bodies.

The consultation will consist of wide targeted consultations of the stakeholders above mentioned and Member States, through the use of questionnaires, workshops, and existing fora (Civil Dialogue Groups, Market Observatories, EU Agricultural Outlook Conference, possible ad hoc expert group specifically dedicated to the preparatory work etc.). Ad-hoc consultation may also be envisaged, based on the results of the feedback received under this roadmap. The questionnaires will be made available in all EU languages after the feedback period for this roadmap has closed. They will be advertised via multiple channels (stakeholder forums, Commission events, social media, etc.).

Evidence base and data collection

A thorough analysis of the extent of the identified problem will be carried out. The analysis will be supported by existing literature and by exchanges with experts. The outcome of the consultations and analysis of lessons learned will be presented in a staff working document, accompanying the Communication.

The analysis, exchanges with experts in various fora will also feed the impact assessment process of the wider (legislative) framework on sustainable food systems (planned for 2023).

The contingency plan, including its coordination mechanism, would involve organising forum meetings, with costs, including administrative costs, similar to those of organising similar formats, such as expert group meetings. The Commission assesses these costs to be proportionate. There would be no direct costs on stakeholders.