European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change

Press release for the report:

'Climate adaptation and mitigation in the agri-food system

– Recommendations for coherent EU policies'

EU's agri-food system must prepare for rising climate risks and accelerate emission reductions

The EU agri-food system, spanning the value chain from fertiliser production to food consumers, is increasingly threatened by climate change, while accounting for roughly one-third of the EU's net greenhouse gas emissions. The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change calls on the EU to strengthen climate adaptation, greenhouse gas emission reductions and removals across the agri-food system to safeguard food security, protect farmers' livelihoods and align agriculture with the EU's climate objectives.

In its new report, *Climate adaptation and mitigation in the agri-food system – Recommendations for coherent EU policies*, the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change concludes that current progress is neither aligned with the EU's 2040 and 2050 climate objectives nor keeping pace with worsening climate risks. Existing policies are insufficient to deliver the necessary transformation and address climate-related risks to farmers and food security.

Climate risks rising – mitigation must accelerate

The EU agri-food system underpins Europe's food security, rural livelihoods and strategic autonomy. Yet it is increasingly exposed to more severe droughts, floods, heatwaves and disease outbreaks, with climate-related agricultural losses already amounting to tens of billions of euros annually and projected to increase significantly in the coming decades.

At the same time, emission reductions and carbon removals in agriculture have remained limited relative to what is required to meet the EU's climate targets. Current and planned policies are projected to deliver only modest additional reductions. Without faster progress within the agri-food system, achieving climate neutrality would require additional emission cuts elsewhere or a much faster scale-up of carbon removals, increasing overall costs and climate-related risks for the EU economy.

> **Prof. Ottmar Edenhofer, Chair of the Advisory Board, commented:** *"Achieving the EU's 2040 and 2050 climate targets in a cost-effective manner requires meaningful emission reductions across the entire economy. While agriculture has made progress, the scale and pace of reductions are not yet sufficient. The sector will need to step up action in the years ahead – to help achieve climate neutrality and to protect farmers' livelihoods, support rural communities, and secure Europe's food supply as the climate continues to change."*

A systemic transition and stronger policy incentives

The Advisory Board concludes that marginal improvements through technologies and farming practices alone will not be sufficient. Climate-proofing the agri-food system requires a systemic transition that advances both adaptation and mitigation across the value chain, including production systems, land use and consumption patterns.

However, existing EU policies – notably the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) – are expected to deliver only modest mitigation and adaptation outcomes in their current form. Upcoming revisions of the EU budget, the CAP and the 2031–2040 climate framework therefore present a critical opportunity to realign agricultural policy with climate objectives, including increasing the sector's climate resilience.

To enable and sustain the transition, the Advisory Board puts forward six recommendations.

1. **Phasing out CAP payments that incentivise the most greenhouse gas-intensive practices**, while exploring alternative income-support mechanisms consistent with climate objectives.
2. Introducing a dedicated **greenhouse gas pricing mechanism for the agri-food system**, applying the *polluter pays* principle gradually and adaptively, while recycling revenues to support farmers and reward carbon removals.
3. Providing **targeted transition support** to help farmers overcome financial and knowledge barriers.
4. Strengthening tools that **help farmers cope with unavoidable climate impacts**.
5. Promoting **healthy, climate-friendly diets and reducing food waste**.
6. Ensuring adequate and timely **public funding** to finance the transition.

The Advisory Board emphasises that the transition must be gradual and fair, with targeted support for farmers and regions facing the greatest adjustment challenges.

> **Prof. Laura Díaz Anadón, Vice-Chair of the Advisory Board, commented:** *"A coherent mix of policies with improved incentives is needed to strengthen both adaptation and mitigation in the agri-food system and to safeguard food security and farmers' livelihoods as climate-related risks increase. The upcoming legislative cycle offers a decisive window to align agricultural policy with the EU's long-term climate objectives and other strategic priorities."*

About the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change

The European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change is an independent body established under the European Climate Law to provide the EU with scientific knowledge, expertise and advice relating to climate change. The Advisory Board evaluates policies and identifies actions and opportunities to successfully achieve the EU's climate targets.

Press contact: Rasmus Sangild / rasmus.sangild@esabcc.europa.eu