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EU Commission encourages governments to tackle rising food prices to support less affluent consumers

In the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its serious implications for agri-food markets, the European Commission has just published a new [Communication](#) on safeguarding food security and boosting the resilience of the EU food system. BEUC welcomes the EU Commission's stance on the need to protect consumers against steep food price hikes and to roll out its blueprint for a more sustainable and resilient food system, i.e. the Farm to Fork Strategy.

According to the Communication, the risk of widespread food shortage is not to be feared for European consumers.¹ However, the rise in prices, also fuelled by high energy and input costs, may threaten food affordability for low-income consumers.

In the short-term, the Commission encourages Member States to use social protection systems to protect vulnerable consumers from food insecurity. In the long run, the Commission reaffirms the need to shift to a sustainable and resilient food system, including by reducing the EU's dependence on feed imports through the uptake of more plant-based diets.

Monique Goyens, BEUC Director General, commented:

"We won't run out of food in the EU. This is an important message that comes across clearly in the Communication and that can help reassure consumers, many of whom have already started rushing to the shops to stock up on pasta, flour, and vegetable oils – leaving shelves empty and pushing prices further up.

"But at times when energy bills are going through the roof, many consumers are at risk of not being able to afford food if prices go up. We are glad that the Commission is encouraging governments to buffer consumers against food poverty through social policy and fiscal measures. It echoes calls by our members in Spain and Germany for instance, who have respectively called for food vouchers² and for 0% VAT on fruit, vegetables and pulses.³

"We couldn't agree more with the European Commission that food sustainability and security are two sides of the same coin. Sadly, recent indications to push back the publication of certain policy initiatives, such as on cutting use of chemical pesticides,⁴ send a different signal.

"As stated by over 400 scientists,⁵ the EU must accelerate the shift towards greener farming and healthier diets with less and better animal products. Recent calls to ditch the Farm to Fork Strategy in light of the current crisis are misguided and will only jeopardise

our food security in the long run. On the contrary, the EU must stick to its guns and roll out its initial plans towards a more resilient and sustainable food system.”
ENDS

¹ The Communication notes that the EU is largely self-sufficient for key agricultural products, being a main wheat and barley exporter and largely able to covers its consumption for other staple crops such as maize or sugar. The EU is also largely self-sufficient for animal products, including dairy and meat, with the notable exception of seafood.

² <https://www.ocu.org/organizacion/prensa/notas-de-prensa/2022/ipcfebrero2022>

³ <https://www.vzbv.de/pressemitteilungen/heizkostenzuschuss-viel-zu-gering-vzbv-fordert-1000-euro-fuers-heizen-und-einen>

⁴ [Initial indicative agenda](#) point about the Sustainable use of pesticides on 23 March is not featuring in the [agenda](#) of today's College meeting.

⁵ <https://www.pik-potsdam.de/en/news/latest-news/food-crisis-due-to-ukraine-war-calls-for-action-less-meat-less-waste-and-greening-eu-agricultural-policy>

