



2022-2025 TASK FORCE SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS & INNOVATION

NARRATIVES, CLIMATE & THE FUTURE

REIMAGINE
PLANET

RIE

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The content of this report reflects an overview of the aims of the Task Force and should not be interpreted as expressing an official position of Re-Imagine Europa or any of the people or organisations mentioned in the report.

The Task Force on “Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation” brings together over eighty experts from different stakeholders and perspectives to reflect how Europe can become a global standard-bearer for sustainability.

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INTRODUCTION

President Ursula von der Leyen placed climate change and innovation at the top of the European agenda, initiating a much-needed re-evaluation of how our economies and societies are set up. Central to this are the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy, recognising the inextricable link between healthy people, healthy societies and a healthy planet and calling for the development of a European model for Sustainable Agriculture.

With less than two years until the next European elections, and an ambitious agenda set for 2023 with several key legislative proposals on the table, the question if Europe will be able to deliver on this ambitious programme remains. As narratives and rhetoric become evermore polarised it seems as if we are stuck in a cycle of distrust leading inexorably to a stalemate.

The Re-Imagine Europa Task Force on Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation was created to go beyond existing polarisations, break the vicious circle of mistrust and focus on common values and ambitions to facilitate a constructive debate about how to achieve these ambitious goals.

Working with the innovative Narrative Methodology and a network of over eighty representatives from different stakeholders and perspectives, the Task Force focusses on very specific challenges to facilitate a constructive debate where existing differences in views and opinions can be the basis for a diversity of solutions and tools to achieve sustainable food systems within the framework of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy.



**“OUR GOAL IS TO RECONCILE
THE WAY WE PRODUCE AND
THE WAY WE CONSUME WITH
OUR PLANET, AND TO MAKE IT
WORK FOR OUR PEOPLE”**

PRESIDENT URSULA VON DER LEYEN

ABOUT RE-IMAGINE EUROPA

Re-Imagine Europa (RIE) is a nonpartisan think tank that delivers world-class research to address some of the most challenging issues we face as a society. Founded by President Giscard d'Estaing to honour his friendship with Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, the organisation works with an innovative methodology based on narratives to look for shared values and solutions that go beyond personal, national or political interests. Working with a strategic and pragmatic approach, Re-Imagine Europa focuses on only a few issues at a time that are considered of strategic importance for Europe. The current priority areas are democracy in a digital society; a fair and competitive economic system; and narratives, climate, and the future.

Each strategic challenge is tackled by a Task Force supported by a Steering Committee and integrated with dozens of experts from policymakers, parliamentarians, academia, think tanks, industry, NGOs, CSOs, and other stakeholder groups.

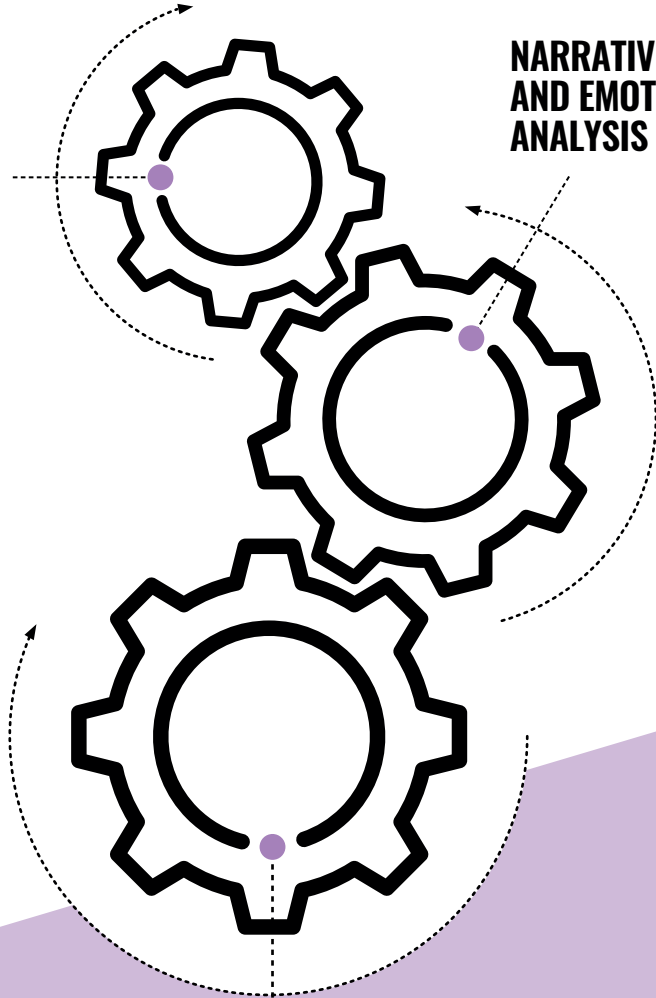
Expert Committees are created through a process of mapping and engagement to ensure that they are representative and diverse, by including different areas of expertise and opinion, as well as new thinking.

An increasingly influential stream of research demonstrates the integration of cognition and emotion in political decision-making, indicating the importance of narratives in building shared visions. Therefore, a key pillar of the work of Re-Imagine Europa is working with its wide network of experts and stakeholders in developing these shared narratives to engage people and explore old problems in a new light.

Re-Imagine Europa is funded by leading foundations including La Caixa Foundation, Fondazione Cariplo, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation as well as project-based funding from the European Commission.

**CONTENT,
EVIDENCE
AND POLICY**

**NARRATIVES
AND EMOTIONAL
ANALYSIS**



**CHANGE
AND RESULTS**



**“NOW IS THE TIME TO TRANSFORM HUMAN-
KIND’S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE NATURAL
WORLD - AND WITH EACH OTHER. AND WE
MUST DO SO TOGETHER.”**

**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES
SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Why Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation

Food and food security are central to all societies. The relationship between food security and socio-political stability has been well documented and has become painstakingly clear since the beginning of 2022. Add to this the effects of climate change, with increasingly unstable weather patterns, and we can understand why this is going to be one of the most important challenges of our time.

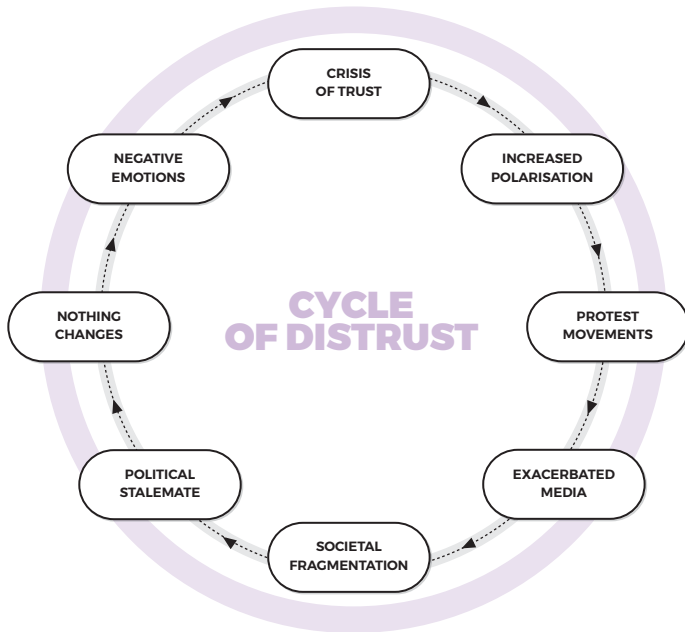
Europe needs more sustainable food systems to cope with dramatic changes to our natural environment, economic instability, and rapid societal transformation. An extremely complex issue that involves many dimensions and objectives such as feeding a growing global population, ensuring food safety, mitigating climate change and environmental degradation, guaranteeing the development of rural areas, promoting economic growth, and equalizing the chances of different farming models.

Unfortunately, whilst the stakes get higher, the debate around food, agriculture, sustainability and innovation seem to get evermore polarised, as documented in the Report produced by the Task Force on “Beyond the Apple of Discord: Existing Narratives and Ways Forward”.



The problem with polarisation

Diversity has always been considered a strength in Europe and strong and multifaceted public discourse is seen as a key factor for democracies. Different ideas can be confronted and compared. Different experiences and perspectives can show other sides of the issue and help build better and more robust solutions. However, if the debate becomes too polarised, this leads to the opposite effect: inaction, frustration and decreasing trust. This is a problem for any society as it makes it impossible to move forward, de facto, generating a negative cycle of distrust that blocks the decision-making process of our democratic institutions. Policymaking is thus short-circuited resulting in a permanent stalemate.



The debate around the European model for sustainable agriculture is currently stuck in this cycle of distrust, jeopardising the whole project. Research shows that we have in common most of the values and objectives such as:

- Supporting small and medium-sized farmers
- Taking urgent action to combat climate change and its devastating impacts
- Safeguarding biodiversity within sustainable systems of farming
- Making sure that Europeans get healthy, affordable and sustainable food
- Ensuring fair economic returns in the food chain

However, instead of focussing on these shared objectives, the debate is concentrated on the more polarising issues, which further exacerbates the cycle of distrust. Game theory has demonstrated the pernicious effects of the lack of trust: the prisoners' dilemma illustrates that when two actors have to make decisions without knowing the choice of the other, they invariably will end up in the worst-case scenario as they will focus on minimising losses rather than maximising gains by trusting the other. When thinking about the future of European Food Systems, will we be focussing on minimising losses or maximising gains?

In 2019, the European Commission set-out the most ambitious green agenda Europe has ever seen including the development of a new model for sustainable agriculture where different models could coexist and thrive. A system where individual farmers and consumers have the freedom to choose the option that works best for them whilst safeguarding the planet, preserving biodiversity and strengthening food security. Objectives that might seem counterintuitive but are possible if we work together.

How do we address this?

To address all these challenges, find the best solutions, and bring Europeans together in support of these solutions we need a new ecosystem for the debate that recognizes not only the multidimensionality of the issues at hand, but also the complexity and intensity of the corresponding public discourse.

The RIE Task Force on Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation was created as a forum that facilitates real dialogue among a wide range of stakeholders with different viewpoints with the primary goal of going beyond political stalemates and finding new, shared pathways forward.

Working with the innovative Narrative Methodology the Task Force focusses on very specific challenges to contribute to the global challenge of building a robust and resilient food system and becoming a global standard for sustainability while protecting biodiversity and reducing land-use.

European calendar

2022 – 2025 will be of strategic importance for the development of a European model for Sustainable Food Systems and in defining the direction Europe will take on these issues in the years to come.

The 2019-2024 von der Leyen Commission set climate change and innovation at the centre of the European agenda launching the most ambitious sustainability programme in European history. With less than 2 years to go, the coming months will be crucial in defining how much of the vision gets transformed into reality.

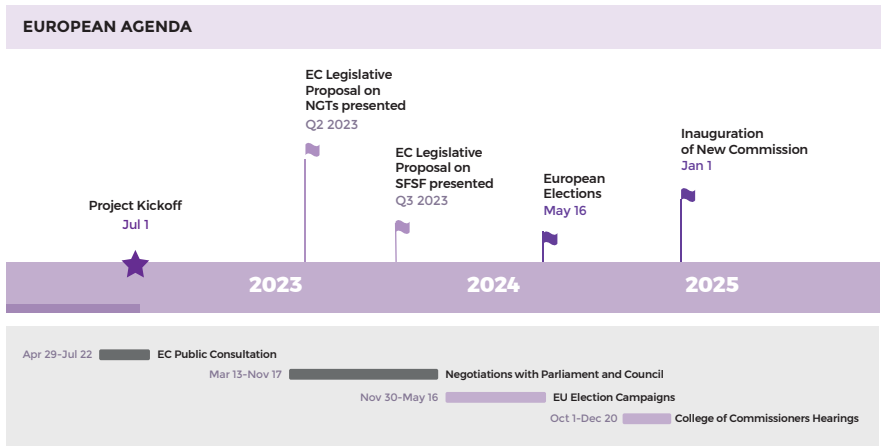
With the next European elections scheduled for May 2024, this period will also be key in determining the goals and challenges that will direct European activity during the 2024-2029 mandate.

The European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Biodiversity Strategy reaffirm the Commission's commitment to make the EU a just, healthy, resource-efficient and

environmentally friendly food system. Three key legislative proposals will be proposed before the end of the mandate:

- A new regulation for the sustainable use of pesticides to meet the 50% reduction goal set forth in the Biodiversity and Farm-to-Fork strategies.
- A legislative proposal for New Genomic Techniques such as targeted mutagenesis or cisgenesis.
- A legislative framework for sustainable food systems that aims to ensure that all foods in the EU food market become sustainable through the horizontal adoption of evidence-based indicators for sustainability assessment.

Will we be able to deliver on the Farm 2 Fork strategy and move forward on these crucial agendas to transform Europe’s model for agriculture, food systems and innovation? That is the challenge!



POLICY OBJECTIVE	INITIATIVES
A EUROPEAN GREEN DEAL	
PESTICIDES	Sustainable use of pesticides - revision of the EU rules (legislative, incl. impact assessment, Article 192(1) TFEU, Q1 2022)
NEW GENOMIC TECHNIQUES	Legislation for plants produced by certain new genomic techniques (legislative, incl. impact assessment, Q2 2023, responds to Article 241 TFEU Council decision (EU 2019/1904)
SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS	Legislative framework for sustainable food systems (legislative, incl. impact assessment, Q3 2023)

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2020-2022 ACTIVITIES OF THE TASK FORCE:



Beyond the Apple of Discord: Existing Narratives and Ways Forward

Publication

The report adopted a narrative approach in examining the structures concealed behind individual arguments in order to better understand how various stories, symbols, images, and metaphors are used to inform the debate on the future of European agriculture.



White Paper on the Regulation of Genome Editing in Agriculture

Publication

The report presented five policy options to be considered in the regulatory debate on the status of NGTs under Union Law.



Beyond the Apple of Discord: Changing our Agri Culture

Virtual Meeting

This meeting addressed the close collaboration needed between sustainability and innovation to develop a new pathway forward that goes beyond the current stalemate.



Genome Editing Beyond the EU: A Global Conversation

Expert Committee Meeting

Members of the Steering Committee and Expert Committee of RIE's Task Force, as well as representatives from the European Commission, MEPs, and other stakeholders came together to address the issues raised in the report *Beyond the Apple of Discord: Existing Narratives and Ways Forward*, as well as policy options to deliver more equitable, resilient, and future-proof regulatory oversight.



On the Ground: A Discussion with European Farmers

Virtual Event

The Task Force was joined by European farmers from a diversity of backgrounds, practising different forms of agriculture to consider the aims of the F2F Strategy, the challenges we must overcome to achieve them and the role of innovation in this process.

PROJECT OVERVIEW 2022-2025

The current polarisation of the debate on food systems prevents the creation of effective solutions to the intricate issues we are currently dealing with. The shifting global context and framing surrounding food systems and innovation underline the need for a thorough rethinking of the operation of our global agricultural systems; the development of resilience to both climate change and geopolitical shocks; and the incorporation of innovation in such settings.

In addition, the absence of a unified strategy based on shared principles has encouraged a return to old concepts, increasing the likelihood of bias entrenchment and social polarisation amongst communities.

Noting the current diversity of interpretations of “sustainable food systems”, the aim of the Task Force is two-fold:

- a.** To develop a shared understanding of what is meant by sustainable food systems, including which values and goals should be prioritised.
- b.** To assess how innovations can support the transition to a European model for sustainable agriculture promoting social, environmental, and economic sustainability, going beyond the debate on NGTs (New Genomic Techniques).

This work will be developed with four objectives which incorporate activities and deliverables to ensure effective project management.



OBJECTIVE 1: REGULATORY APPROACHES

Create and deliver proposals to facilitate the creation of a new European model for sustainable agriculture through the regulatory and policy agenda of the European Commission. This will include working on the legislative proposal for New Genomic Techniques such as targeted mutagenesis or cisgenesis and the legislative framework for sustainable food systems.

Activities: Organise events with the support of our knowledge partners on regulatory approaches to sustainability and innovation as well as Indicators and Implementation of sustainability in agriculture & food systems. Such events will be facilitated by the development of an interactive database on the global regulation of genome editing.

Deliverable: Proposals for a new European legal framework for plants obtained by targeted mutagenesis and cisgenesis, that includes a sustainability aspect.

Deliverable: White Paper on an Ideal European Framework for the Regulation of new Technologies and Innovations.

OBJECTIVE 2: 2024-2029 PRIORITIES

Work towards ensuring that the political priorities for the next European mandate (2024-2029) are supportive of the general direction of the Task Force for enhancing the role of innovation to support sustainable food systems.

Activities: Convening expert committee and strategic meetings with different stakeholders to map and propose a shared vision for the priorities the next European Commission should consider. We will also organise meetings with the relevant Directorate Generals of the EC, political groups and key stakeholders to create support for the priorities identified and to promote the creation of a European Parliament Intergroup.

Deliverable: Short paper (two pages) outlining key shared priorities that the next European Commission should prioritise regarding sustainable food systems and innovation.

OBJECTIVE 3: NEW NARRATIVE ECOSYSTEM

Develop a new ecosystem for narratives around sustainable food systems and innovation to move beyond the current stalemate and polarisation.

Activities: Monitoring how narratives are evolving to reframe the discussion in cooperation with key stakeholders, Expert and Steering committee members and IOs. We will facilitate this work in partnership with our knowledge partners through exhibitions and workshops.

Deliverables: "Toolbox" of what farmers might need to be able to respond to the multiple challenges they face today.

OBJECTIVE 4: BUILDING BRIDGES

Increase trust between different stakeholders to develop a new and shared vision for European Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation thus shifting current alliances of key communities away from polarised positions to more neutral and shared ground.

Activities: We are going to strive to shift alliances and build trust by setting up think groups to develop a strategy for depolarising narratives and developing training sessions with core stakeholders and partners.

Deliverables: Handbook on the communication of new technologies and innovation that promotes the development of a new ecosystem of narratives that goes beyond the existing polarisation.

GOVERNANCE

The Task Force brings together roughly one hundred experts from key stakeholder groups within the Expert Committee. As such, the Expert Committee is the main constituent body of the Task Force, and a list of all its members can be found on the website.

Both the Expert Committee and the Steering Committee will be overseen by the Task Force Director. The Director and each of the members of the Steering Committee are also engaged in the coordination and guidance of the Expert Committee.

STEERING COMMITTEE

Prof. Anne CAMBON-THOMSEN

Emeritus Research Director in CNRS and Member of the European Group on Ethics in Science and New Technologies (EGE)

Prof. Maria da Graça CARVALHO

Member of the European Parliament (EPP – ITRE), former Minister of Science, Innovation and Higher Education

Prof. Paolo DE CASTRO

Member of the European Parliament (S&D –AGRI), former Minister of Agriculture of Italy

Mr Garlich von ESSEN

Secretary General of Euroseeds

Prof. Dirk INZÉ

Full Professor at Ghent University and Scientific Director of the VIB, Department of Plant Systems Biology, member of KVAB

Prof. Urs NIGGLI

President of agroecology.science - Institute of Sustainable Food and Farming Systems

Mr Pekka PESONEN

Secretary General of Copa-Cogeca

Prof. Pere PUIGDOMENECH

ALLEA Board Member | Institute of Catalan Studies and Royal Academy of Sciences and Arts

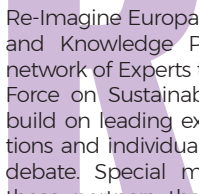
Mr Nils TORVALDS

Member of the European Parliament (RENEW – ENVI)

Dr. Peter KEARNS

Director of RIE's Task Force on Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation | Former Principal Administrator at the OECD

PARTNERS



Re-Imagine Europa counts on its Strategic and Knowledge Partners as well as a network of Experts to ensure that the Task Force on Sustainable Food Systems can build on leading expertise from organisations and individuals already active in the debate. Special mention should go to those partners that are involved in the project as sub-awardees:

ALL European Academies (ALLEA):

ALLEA is the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities, representing more than 50 academies from over 40 EU and non-EU countries. Since its foundation in 1994, ALLEA speaks out on behalf of its members on the European and international stages, promotes science as a global public good, and facilitates scientific collaboration across borders and disciplines.

Jointly with its members, ALLEA seeks to improve the conditions for research, to provide the best independent and interdisciplinary science advice available, and to strengthen the role of science in society. In doing so, ALLEA channels the expertise of European academies for the benefit of the research community, decision-makers and the public. Outputs include science-based advice in response to societally relevant topics, as well as activities to encourage scientific cooperation, scientific reasoning and values through public engagement.

ALLEA is constituted as a non-for-profit association and remains fully independent from political, religious, commercial or ideological interests.

ALLEA's activities of particular relevance to this project are the PERiTia project, building on the work of the Working Group on Truth,

Trust and Expertise, the work done on Genome Editing in Crop Improvement, as well as a new project examining the proliferation of scientific misinformation and responses to it. Further, ALLEA core initiatives focus on intellectual property rights, including patenting of CRISPR-Cas and ethics in science, where ALLEA maintains standing working groups.

European Sustainable Agriculture through Genome Editing network (EU-SAGE):

EU-SAGE is a network representing 133 European plant science institutes and societies that have joined forces to provide information about genome editing and promote the development of European and EU member state policies that enable the use of genome editing for sustainable agriculture and food production.

Created following the CJEU decision, leading scientists representing more than 85 plant and life sciences research centres and institutes endorsed a first position paper, initiated by the VIB-UGent Center for Plant Systems Biology, that called upon European policy makers to safeguard innovation in plant science and agriculture. During 2019 this evolved into a network of 133 European plant science institutes and societies, which amongst other things, wrote a letter to the European Commission and published an Open Letter on 25 July 2019 to once more call upon European policy makers and politicians to take appropriate action to safeguard genome editing for sustainable agriculture. EU-SAGE is one of the EU-level stakeholder organisations invited to the targeted consultation of the European Commission.

Institute of Agroecology

The Institute of Agroecology was founded in 2020 by Prof Urs Niggli. It is an independent, non-profit policy studies institute, a green think tank and a leading centre for the analysis and development of environmental policy in Europe and beyond. It develops solutions for agriculture and the food industry and implements the latest research results. The institute provides research and advisory services, expertise and project development for food systems of the future.

Urs Niggli is one of the world's foremost agricultural scientists and was the Director of the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) until March 2020. Under his leadership FiBL grew from 20 staff to its current 200, became a leading research establishment in the area of organic agriculture, and developed into a European network with offices in Germany, France, Austria and Hungary as well as a representation in Brussels.

In addition to the sub-awardees, there is another prominent partner that provides great support to Re-Imagine Europa's Task Force on Sustainable Food Systems and Innovation: The **European Food Forum**, an independent, politically-led, non-partisan forum established by members of the European Parliament from different political groups with the aim of fostering open dialogue on sustainable food systems among policymakers, food supply chain actors, civil society organisations, research and academia, and other public institutions.

THANK YOU

Re-Imagine Europa warmly thanks its experts and partners for their precious support and cooperation. We are deeply grateful that they have chosen to be a part of our community to remagine Europa with us!

See full list of experts on the website.



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