

**Common Declaration of Austria, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia**

**European Soya Declaration – Enhancing soya and other legumes cultivation**

**Preamble**

The undersigned support increased production of legume crops for food and feed as a contribution to the development of more sustainable and resilient agricultural systems in Europe. This supports the United Nations Agenda 2030 and the European Union's Sustainable Development Strategy.

Agenda 2030, with 17 sustainable development goals (SDG), was adopted by all Member States of the United Nations Organisation at a summit in September 2015. The measures covered by this declaration contribute particularly to Goals 2 and 15. Goal 2 focuses on ending hunger, increasing food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture. Goal 15 aims to protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and stop and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss. This declaration is a commitment to the sustainable development of efficient, resilient and productive agricultural and food systems directly supporting Goal 2 and supporting Goal 15 through associated measures to protect agricultural resources and natural and semi-natural ecosystems.

The EU Sustainability Strategy was adopted in 2001 to sustainably increase prosperity and to improve the quality of life now and for future generations, and to tap the environmental and social innovation potential of the economy. The strategy aims to prevent the over-exploitation of resources, gain more recognition of the value of ecosystem services, and stop the decline in biodiversity. The greater use of the ecosystem services that legumes can provide in Europe makes an important contribution to achieving these objectives.

**Drivers and objectives**

Legume crops are vital to the global agricultural system but only 3-4% of the arable land area in Europe is used for legume crops. Because of the special characteristics of legumes, increasing European legume production contributes to the diversification of cropping with benefits for other crops, particularly cereals. Legume crops are 'break' crops that reduce weed, pest and disease risks in cropping systems. This reduces the need for pesticides. They

also 'fix' atmospheric nitrogen reducing fertilizer nitrogen use. A wide range of legume species adapted to different farming circumstances is available to expand legume production all over Europe.

Soybean is the most widely cultivated legume in the world. Originating from China, where it has been grown for thousands of years, the soybean was introduced to Europe nearly 150 years ago. Although still widely thought of as new to Europe, it is also the most widely grown grain legume in Europe where it grows well. Yields in Europe are high and similar to those in USA and Brazil which are the main exporters of soybeans and soybean meal.

The signatories to this declaration maintain that the following elements relating to the sustainable production of soybeans and other legumes support Goals 2 and 15 of the Agenda 2030 of the United Nations:

- development of sustainable soybean and other legumes production in suitable areas of Europe taking into account resources availability;
- integration of soybean and other legumes cropping into diverse well-planned crop rotations;
- use of integrated crop protection that follows the 'as much as is necessary and as little as possible' principle with priority given to the use of host-plant resistance and tolerant cultivars;
- maintenance of traditional valued landscapes, landscape features and protection of high nature value biotopes in agricultural landscapes; and
- development of sustainable soybean and other legume markets in Europe that balance and meet the needs of growers, processors, livestock producers and consumers along transparent value chains.

Soybean and other legumes production can be beneficially increased in many countries in Europe. Large areas are cultivated with wheat, maize, oilseed rape and sunflower in simple cropping systems that lack diversity. Including legumes in these cropping systems strengthens local economies, increases local and regional protein self-sufficiency, and supports protein partnerships. Protein crop production in Europe generally supports rural economies and creates jobs in farming, processing and usage of locally produced proteins for food and feed.

In view of the need for sustainable agricultural production systems that support Agenda 2030 and the EU Sustainability Strategy of 2001, the signatories support local, regional, national and European initiatives to develop sustainable protein supplies that are highly accepted in

consumer markets. Efforts include agricultural policy measures that support more diverse cropping systems, promote innovation, or support the development of logistics, processing and markets. In addition, measures adopted by the signatories will:

- provide consumers with information on promoting plant proteins;
- encourage more precise livestock feeding to increase the efficiency of protein use in feeding;
- improve the use of protein from grassland;
- support more effective use of other European protein sources such as rapeseed and sunflower meal, and by-products such as distillers grains;
- increase locally-adapted legume production, in line with available natural resources, using sustainable production techniques and locally adapted legumes; and
- strengthen support for certification of sustainably-produced soybeans and meal imported from other parts of the world to meet remaining demand.

Because of increasing consumer interest in GMO-free products, especially those of animal origin, the signatories are making efforts to bring forward an increasing choice for consumers with respect to GMO-free food and feed. They therefore support the further development of markets for sustainably cultivated non-GMO soybeans and soybean products as well as the establishment of transparent product labeling systems based on certified production standards such as Danube Soya and Europe Soya. The signatories also support the development of partnerships, including between EU and non-EU countries such as Ukraine, Moldova, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, so that more sustainable, certified soybeans are cultivated, processed and traded in Europe.

Brussels, 17 July 2017