

European Ideas Network - Summer University  
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**EIN POLICY ROUNDTABLE ON  
SUSTAINABLE FARMING AND FOOD SECURITY**

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**Background**

Food is an **essential** part of European culture and civilisation - and has major importance for the economy, the environment and public health. In an open and globalised world, this sector is one that is subject to **rapid** change - facing issues such as problems with supply, dependency, competition, and new technologies.

A growing world population - with an expected total of **eight billion** people by 2025 - is placing greater demands on the supply of food. Rising prices are becoming a destabilising force in the global economy. Poor **harvests**

in various parts of the world, combined with lower food reserves, have had an impact on supply. Higher input costs have led to increased prices. The pattern of demand for high-value food products is shifting as increasingly affluent consumers in large parts of Asia change buying habits.

Bio-fuels are having a significant impact and represent currently the only substitute for fossil fuels that is available on the market on a large-scale. Unlike fossil fuels, bio-fuels are **renewable** and can create significant savings in greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, in 2007 the European Union agreed on a ten per cent

**binding**  
minimum target for

**bio-fuels**  
by 2020. On the other hand, the increasing production of protein crops for bio-fuels causes competition between energy plants and staple food. Is this a good diversion of valuable land and other resources? Should subsidies still be available for energy crops? Technology may be able to reconcile this conflict. Genetically modified (GMOs) plants designed for the production of energy crops may boost yields. Second generation

**bio-energy**  
, which processes manure and agricultural waste materials, could also help reach the target with less damage to food production.

**Organic** farming has a growing market. But production of organic products requires more land to produce the same amount as in conventional farming - and artificially increased organic production by subsidisation would lead to an overall decrease in EU production.

Recent world **trade negotiations**, although as yet unsuccessful, have done little to reassure European farmers that the multi-functionality of European farming is secure. The ongoing fear is that non-trade concerns about food security and food safety are consistently given less attention in favour of market ideology or the need to try to get a deal. And yet at the same time, European consumers are giving increasing importance to the guaranteed supply of safe products.

The Common **Agricultural Policy (CAP)** is going through a process of change. Traditional priorities concerning production are being joined by measures aimed to reassure consumers and taxpayers. In future, most agricultural aid will be 'decoupled' from production in favour of single farm payments that depend on surface area rather than production. At the same time, the need for production has brought enormous changes to the use of such instruments as 'set aside'. Production in traditionally less favourable areas has been reassessed. What is the role for the reformed CAP in stimulating increased production? The CAP '

### **Health Check**

' of 2007 took a minimalist view of the need to reform the CAP. But the place of agriculture in the context of the global economy in 2008 is very different to that of 2003, when the last significant reforms were undertaken. The increasing need to manage resources such as water - combined with the need to boost yields and the fight against climate change - have all radically altered the outlook for the agricultural sector in the EU.

**The following are some questions that could be addressed at this year's Fiuggi summer university:**

**? Can the EU afford to put at risk its food security by allowing agriculture to remain within the WTO agenda? Can food security and food safety be ensured through a better balance between trade and non-trade concerns? What should be the main elements of the reinforcement of such non-trade concerns?**

**? Should the Common Agricultural Policy be scrapped totally and replaced by an overt policy of protection for the EU's food production industry?**

**? Can the survival of rural economies and principles of rural regeneration be left to market forces, or should support policies be put in place to pump-prime the young, innovative and dynamic entrepreneurs of the future?**

**? How do the three pillars of sustainability - social, economic and environmental - fit into the framework of the CAP?**

**? Should the beneficiaries of sustainable - and so possibly non-commercial - strategies for energy, water and environmental preservation and enhancement pay more, and more directly, for these benefits?**

**? What are the likely impacts of enlargement on rural and food security policies?**

**? Is there a real conflict between the use of land for the production of biofuels as against traditional agricultural commodity production?**