



ACELG annual conference 2023

Friday 17 November 2023

Catalyzing sustainable food systems amidst urgency and contestation - The role of EU law and governance

The EU food system is at a crossroads. It faces interrelated environmental, climate, health, and social challenges, which together require urgent systemic change. Since the adoption of the EU Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies as part of the EU Green Deal, the European Union has embarked on one of the world's most ambitious efforts to catalyze a transition towards a sustainable food system. Guided by the goals of a fair, healthy and environmentally friendly food system, the EU has set up an impressive legislative agenda. The flagship initiative, the proposal for a *European Framework Law for Sustainable Food Systems (the 'FSFS')*, is expected by the end of 2023 and aims to 'set the foundations for systemic changes' needed to accelerate the food system transition.

Yet reforms are taking place in a political climate characterized by the war in Ukraine and geopolitical instability, which has intensified calls for more competitiveness and food security. Within Europe, farmer's protests are challenging the EU green agenda. In the Dutch 2023 regional election, the newly founded Farmer Citizen Movement (BBB) has become the largest party and their grievances are likely to shape the upcoming Dutch parliamentary election. At this crucial moment, the ACELG annual conference gathers scholars, policymakers, and civil society to discuss the role of EU law and governance in catalyzing the transition towards a sustainable food system amidst urgency and contestation.

EU law and governance are supposed to play a key role in such transition. However, the current EU institutions, laws and governance instruments relevant to the food transition have been shaped by the paradigms of the currently dominant intensive industrial agri-food system – the very system that requires radical transformation. EU policies are said to be 'highly path-dependent and siloed, continuing to chip away at problems that are increasingly self-reinforcing and systemic' (De Schutter et al 2020). Health, environmental sustainability, and social justice have for decades been treated not as integral to, but as marginal to the EU Common Agricultural Policy. This raises the question whether EU law and governance are currently well-equipped for the systemic nature of the challenge.

Systems thinking requires 'a different way of seeing the world.' (Van der Heijden 2022). To challenge the current, unsustainable paradigm of food production and consumption in a systematic way, EU law (and its professional community) must look critically upon itself. Does EU law at present allow to see the world of food in a radically new way? How does a truly transformative EU food systems law look like? How can EU governance successfully bring about food sustainability in a polarized political climate? By addressing these and related questions, the conference also investigates how EU law and governance research can contribute to the broader transdisciplinary efforts to tackle food sustainability challenges (Dekker et al. 2020).

Programme

Friday 17 November 2023

Room A3.15, Rec A Building, Amsterdam Law School

9:30 Opening Maria Weimer, Director of the Amsterdam Centre for European Law and Governance

9:45 **Keynote** by Olivier De Schutter, Professor of Law, UCLouvain and SciencePo (Paris), UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, former UN Special rapporteur on the right to food.

10:30 break

10:45 **Panel 1: The transformative potential of the EU Framework Law for Sustainable Food Systems**

The EU Framework Law for Sustainable Food Systems

Anastasia Alvizou, Deputy Head of Unit 'Farm to Fork Strategy' of DG SANTE, European Commission

Towards an EU food systems law

Isabel Paliotta, European Environmental Bureau / EU Food Policy Coalition

Systems thinking in EU law - how to save the Farm to Form Strategy

Hanna Schebesta, Wageningen University

The role of food democracy in EU law and policy

Sabine Weiland, Catholic University of Lille

12:15 lunch break

13:00 **Panel 2: "Seeing the world of food in a new way" – Rethinking food in EU law and governance**

Food De-Commodification as Sustainability

Alessandra Arcuri, Erasmus University Rotterdam

Lobbying for animals in EU law and policy

Camilla Björkbom, Eurogroup for Animals

The EU Nature Restoration Law - rethinking food security

Elisabet Nadeu, Institute for European Environmental Policy

Food Choice as Environmental Factor

Anniek De Ruijter, University of Amsterdam

14:30 break

14:45 **Panel 3: ‘Change from the bottom up’ – How can EU law learn from and support food democracy and local food sustainability practices?**

EU law and food heritage

Floris De Witte, London School of Economics

Reimagining labour in food production: learning from and with Dutch local sustainability practices

Vladimir Bogoeski, University of Amsterdam

The role of Food Policy Networks in the sustainability transition

Arnold van der Valk, Food Council Metropolitan Region of Amsterdam

The challenges of ‘nature-inclusive’ farming in the Netherlands

Hens Runhaar, Utrecht University

16:15 break

16:30 **Roundtable ‘Sustainability futures – the role of technology in sustainable food systems’**

Maria Weimer, University of Amsterdam

Sabine Weiland, Catholic University of Lille

Michelle Habets, Rathenau Institute

Michel Haring, Swammerdam Institute of Life Sciences, University of Amsterdam

Helene Schmutzler, Organics Europe

18:00 End of conference/reception