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Main drivers of food security

On 4 January 2023, the Commission published an analysis on the "[Drivers of food security](#)".



The document examines the effects of climate change, environmental degradation, the economic consequences of COVID-19, and Russia's invasion of Ukraine on food security.

Based on the latest scientific evidence, this analysis identifies different types of key drivers: biophysical and environmental; research, innovation, and technology; economy and market; food supply chain performance; political and institutional; socio-cultural; and demographic drivers.

Considering the views of various stakeholders, it further looks at short- and long-term connections between the different factors.

According to the document, the availability of food is not at risk in Europe today. The affordability of food is, however, a growing concern for an increasing number of low-income households.

Availability, affordability, utilisation, and stability cannot be presumed as always given. Some of the drivers may become risks for food security and expose weaknesses in the food system, if not properly addressed. The EU has launched many initiatives to secure a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient food system with a realistic timeline and necessary support instruments.

Europeans concerned by cost-of-living crisis and expect additional EU measures

According to [European Parliament Statistics](#) published on 12 January 2023, European citizens are increasingly concerned about the cost-of-living crisis and expect the EU to implement measures to mitigate its effects.

The rising costs of living are the most pressing worry for 93% of Europeans, followed by the threat of poverty and social exclusion (82%). Recent crises strengthened citizens' support for the European Union: 72% believe that their country has benefited from being a member of the EU and 62% see EU membership as a "good thing". Citizens expect the EU to continue working on solutions to reduce the repercussions of the consecutive crises.

In every EU Member State, Europeans are worried about the rising cost of living, with high results in Greece (100%), Cyprus (99%), Italy, and Portugal (both 98%).

The spiralling prices, including for energy and food, are felt across all sociodemographic categories such as gender or age as well as all educational and socio-professional backgrounds.

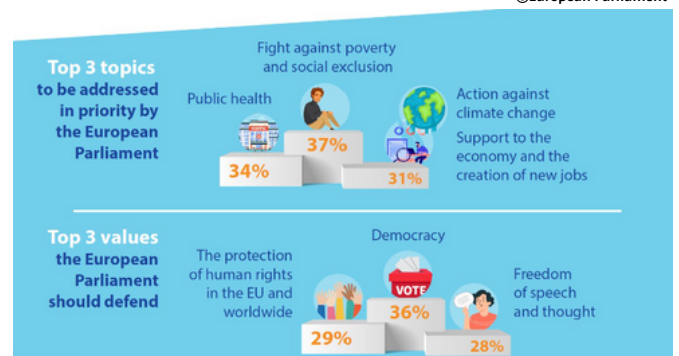
The survey also looks at the impact of different factors on the respondents through the "Polycrisis method". The multiple geopolitical crises of the past years continue to play an important role.

With inflation at its highest level in decades, citizens want the European Parliament to focus on the fight against poverty and social exclusion (37%).

Public health remains relevant for many citizens (34%) – as does the fight against climate change (31%). Support to the economy and the creation of new jobs (31%) is also a key demand.



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European Citizens' Panel on food waste



Over the last 3 months the European Citizens' Panel on food waste reduction took place as a result of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The first session was held in December and opened by Vice-President for Democracy and Demography Dubravka Suica and the Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Stella Kyriakides, who highlighted the need to put citizens at the heart of EU policy making but also the importance of the food system and food security, meaning that food waste becomes a moral and economic imperative.

The second session in January took place online and gave the citizens the opportunity to discuss their ideas in 12 groups looking at topics of food value chain, food business initiatives and consumer behaviour changes.

The third and last panel in February concluded the initiative through another round of discussions with expert groups, among them FEBA.

The citizens then formulated their final 23 recommendations aimed at boosting ongoing efforts to reduce food waste and presented during the plenary meeting.

As a next step, the Citizens' Panel recommendations will complement the impact assessment and open public consultation carried out by the Commission on the EU initiative to revise the Waste Framework Directive with binding food waste reduction targets.



EU feed autonomy - Closing the gaps in European food security

The European Parliament published a [briefing](#) on 8 February 2023 examining the diversification of the sources of animal feed in order to strengthen EU food security.

In recent years, a series of crises has affected the availability of animal feed, creating additional problems for a sector that is already struggling with fast rising producer prices. While some challenges for the feed sector are structural, like the European Union's lack of plant-based protein, other factors are a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, global disruptions of the supply chain caused by weather extremes, and the war in Ukraine. These factors affected the consumer prices.



In December 2022, inflation for food (including tobacco and alcohol) in the Euro area reached 13.8%, up from 3.2% in the same period of the previous year, and surpassed energy as the main driver of inflation.

Figure 1 – Annual price changes (in %) for agricultural outputs and inputs

% change, 2012-2022, EU estimates

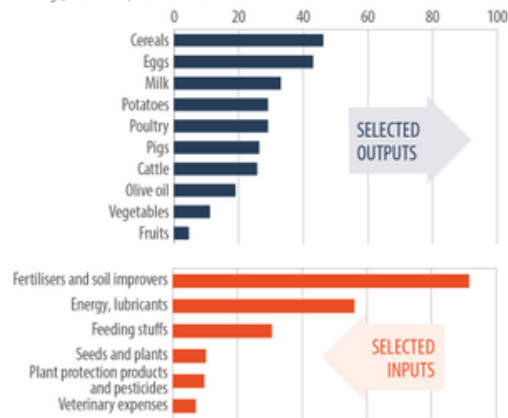


Figure 1: [Eurostat Data](#) ©European Parliament

According to the latest European Parliament Eurobarometer survey, the dramatic rise in the cost of living is the biggest concern for people in the EU (93% of respondents), followed by poverty and social exclusion (82%).

Basic staples such as bread, meat, cooking oils, and dairy products are the most affected by inflationary pressures (see Figure 1).

Addressing the challenges to feed supply would help ensure availability and affordability of animal products, thus mitigating inflation.

European hospitality and food service sector reports 20% reduction in food waste

The report published by the International Food Waste Coalition (IFWC) on 29 September 2022 shows that food waste has dropped by more than 20% across Europe's hospitality and food service sector since 2019.



Figures indicate an average of 108 grams of waste per cover, representing a 7% decrease compared to 2021 and a drop of more than 20% against 2019.

Overall a positive trend can be observed with the most impressive results seen in corporate canteens which have achieved a 35% reduction in food waste over the past 3 years.

The numbers show that, despite the negative impact of the pandemic, new practices around forecasting, planning, consumer engagement, and food redistribution are driving a sustainable trend towards more effective food waste reduction.



European Year of Skills 2023

2023 was announced as the European Year of Skills following the European Year of Youth in 2022. For the green and digital transition to be successfully implemented, new jobs will be created and the EU economy will transform, requiring citizens to be equipped with the right skills.

The goal of the European Year of Skills is therefore to support upskilling or reskilling.



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A workforce with the skills that are in demand also contributes to sustainable growth, leads to more innovation, and improves companies' competitiveness.

However, currently, more than three quarters of companies in the EU report difficulties in finding workers with the necessary skills, and latest figures from Eurostat suggest that only 37% of adults undertake training on a regular basis.



Horizon Europe work programme available

Funding opportunities for topics related to food waste were launched by the European Commission on 23 January 2023. The Horizon Europe work programme, covering the years 2023-2024, has been published in December 2022.

With it, the EU will invest around €13.5 billion in research and innovation that will shape the future of Europe.

A substantial part of this funding will be dedicated to targeted actions that support the green and digital transitions for our societies and economies as well as our security, resilience, and a sustainable recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Under Cluster 6 Food, Bioeconomy, Natural resources, Agriculture and Environment, there are several funding opportunities for topics related to food waste:

- Providing marketing solutions to prevent and reduce the food waste related to marketing standards

OPEN, deadline to apply: 12/04/2023

- Microbiomes fighting food waste through applicable solutions in food processing, packaging, and shelf life

OPEN, deadline to apply: 12/04/2023

- Preventing and reducing food waste to reduce environmental impacts and to help reach 2030 climate targets

FORTHCOMING

Economic and social inequalities in Europe in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic

The [report](#) published by Eurofound on 24 January 2023 examines the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on inequalities in Europe. Using indicators from the EU's Multidimensional Inequality Monitoring Framework (MIMF), it shows how inequality in the spheres of income, health, employment, and education changed between 2010 and 2020.

It also examines the main drivers of this change during the pandemic and explores the relationships between government policies in several domains. The key findings focus on the role of income, which has been less impacted by COVID-19 but now is at the heart of the cost-of-living crisis.

Health inequality is closely related to income inequality and during the pandemic, access to medical services especially for persons with lower incomes has been reduced.

The report also revealed that working from home during the pandemic may have created inequalities between low- and high-income groups, where temporary workers, young people, and those in precarious employment emerged as more vulnerable to crises, accentuating gender inequality in childcare and housework.

Overall, the COVID-19 pandemic had varying impacts on social groups, depending on existing disadvantages, and it was widely believed that it triggered a rise in inequalities across different areas of life.



Enabling a legal environment for food loss and waste



The legal brief published by the FAO outlines a set of key national level regulatory measures that contribute to an enabling environment for the prevention and reduction of food losses and waste (FLW) at all stages of the food supply chain under an agri-food system approach.

FLW is a global burden with a negative impact on the economic, social, and environmental elements of a sustainable development. The loss and waste of food suitable for human consumption weakens food security and nutrition but also affects the human right to adequate food.

Regulatory measures to tackle FLW include establishing institutional mechanisms for coordination, clear responsibilities among all stakeholders involved in the food supply chain, as well as setting legally binding targets for the reduction of food losses and waste.

These measures could lead to enhanced transparency and accountability of all the actors along the supply chain relevant for the prevention and reduction of good food being discarded.



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