

Published on *The Parliament Magazine* (<https://www.theparliamentmagazine.eu>)

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Me(a)t the Future

Written by Jonathan Benton on 31 March 2020 in Opinion Plus
Opinion Plus

Karsten Maier highlights the functioning of the food-chain during crisis and its approach to future EU policy.



Karsten Maier (right), Secretary General of the European Livestock and Meat Traders Union (UECBV) | Photo credit: UECBV

When I was given the opportunity to take the podium at last year's WTO-public forum in Geneva, I raised the issue of crisis management and the necessity of coming together, more efficiently and much faster than the usual worldwide procedure. I repeated it in a Civil Dialogue Group in Brussels this January, although I have to admit that at the time, I was actually thinking about a solution for the African Swine Fever. Today, the Coronavirus puts the world in a completely new and serious situation that hardly anyone could have predicted.

While we must wait to see what the new "European Green Deal" and "Farm-to-Fork-strategy" will bring, right now it is up to us to find solutions. This should not be postponed too long but the Farm-to-Fork strategy – meaning a chain – should be at the core of our work, especially as that's what our sector represents and stands for. Therefore, we are prepared and willing to hold discussions with policymakers, authorities, scientists and the public on this issue.

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The livestock and meat industry's priorities are to protect the health and safety of our staff and customers and to ensure a consistent supply of high quality and nutritious red meat for our consumers. EU food safety and welfare standards are the highest in the world and the European Food Safety Authority has stated that food is not a source or route of transmission for the virus.

So, the main goal of the EU's Common Agricultural Policy has become more topical than ever: producing safe and nutritious food in enough quantity to feed the EU, while providing a fair income to farmers and at affordable prices for consumers. Travelling around Europe you can see this in action, with the livestock and meat sector playing a key role in the management of rural areas.

What you cannot see directly is the sector's significant contribution to the EU economy. An important aspect of the closed-loop economy of livestock and meat production is sustainability, where the benefits of the sector and its achievements are improved using the latest research and innovation. Eating every day, you can be aware of how deeply rooted meat is in our culture and eating habits and how it is linked to the enjoyment of food while also contributing to our good health. It has also been an important part of a balanced diet for thousands of years.

As the design of Europe's food system is very complex, the approaches of the Green Deal must be based on a solid scientific foundation supported by correct and comprehensive EU reference figures and review of EU legislation. Therefore, and in today's time of crisis, it is important to work on fair and concise communication. The crisis draws our attention to how important it is to be united in the European Union.

"Eating every day, you can be aware of how deeply rooted meat is in our culture and eating habits and how it is linked to the enjoyment of food while also contributing to our good health"

Therefore, we think it is time to say thanks to our farmers, livestock and meat traders, slaughterhouses, cutting plants, processing plants and all the links in the chain that are doing a great job. They do everything imaginable, day and night and around the clock, to fill the supermarket shelves and provide the people in Europe and around the world with the resources they need. Under no circumstances should this be called into question.

It is rather indecent that in a time of crisis some – even those having “green” and “peace” in their name – are inciting fear and discord while we need keep the food chain running. Personally, I am not afraid - on the contrary: let's seize the opportunity and **“Me(a)t the Future”**.

About the author



Karsten Maier is Secretary General of the European Livestock and Meat Traders Union (UECBV). For more information, visit: www.uecbv.eu ^[6]



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