



Joint NGO statement: Shut down factory farming to save energy

While industrial agriculture lobbies are pressing the EU for more money and secure access to energy during the current crisis, governments should instead shut down factory farming this winter. Europe would not only save energy but also mitigate the climate and public health crises.

Across the EU, governments are putting in place measures to save energy, including shifting pressure on consumers. Denmark [urges](#) citizens to take shorter showers. Italy [invites](#) citizens to turn off the stove while cooking pasta. Yet, all governments across Europe have so far ignored the elephant in the room – industrial animal farming, which is highly energy-intensive.

The big Brussels-based lobby groups representing the food industry have just [asked](#) the EU to supervise Member State gas rationing plans “to make sure they prioritise the agri-food sector,” saying that supply chain constraints have been exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

In addition, EU poultry producers are [demanding](#) more subsidies, highlighting that a lack of energy supply would entail producers to go “out of production within 18 months” as they need energy for heating, lighting, ventilation, feeding systems, transport of feed and live birds, heating of water for plucking the birds, cooling systems, steaming and heating the feed, etc. Should the factory farms fail to get the subsidies and support they asked for, they cynically threaten to halve the living space of baby chicks, in a quite blunt form of blackmail.

While plant-based foods merit support to benefit public health, environment and farmers, this is not the case for industrially produced animal products.

Industrial animal farming, or factory farming, exploits animals mercilessly. It significantly contributes to climate change by direct emissions from animals and through feed production. It causes extinction of species, pollutes our air and water and is the perfect breeding ground for pandemics. It has majorly deteriorated our health by encouraging over-consumption of animal products.

If we are to mitigate the current energy crisis and its looming economic consequences, we need ambitious political decisions that go beyond the usual tactic of placing the responsibility on citizens’ consumption habits.

As the EU Commission’s Farm to Fork strategy outlines, the EU’s food consumption patterns are unsustainable and the EU average ‘consumption of whole-grain cereals, fruit and vegetables, legumes and nuts is insufficient.’ Now is the time for the EU to deliver on its commitments under the European Green Deal, the Farm to Fork Strategy and the Europe’s Beating Cancer Plan and ensure long-term sustainability of EU food systems while promoting healthy plant-rich diets.

BirdLife Europe and Central Asia, Compassion in World Farming, the European Environmental Bureau and Four Paws are therefore calling on the European Union and its Member States to ensure that the energy-intensive industrial animal farming shuts down as part of an effective strategy to tackle the energy crisis. This progressive and ambitious action would also help deliver the EU’s climate and public health commitments.