



Brussels, 6th of June 2023

Subject: Reaction to EPP's withdrawal from the democratic negotiation process of the Nature Restoration Law: a People's Party?

Dear members of the European People's Party,

We write to you to express our deepest concerns regarding your **announcement to withdraw from the negotiations on the planned Nature Restoration Law (NRL)**. The **core values of EPP** show understanding of the need to safeguard nature and “to transmit the beauty of the world” to protect human well-being.

However, the attempts to undermine the future work on NRL **illustrate a disregard towards a broad scientific consensus, as well as towards the well-being of European citizens and EPP's own values. EPP promised to restore the climate balance and protect biodiversity:** *“We must base our decisions on facts and science rather than rely on superficial ideology and communication guided by slogans and deprived of substance. Only working in sobriety and thinking long-term will allow us to restore the climate balance, to protect biodiversity, to promote animal welfare, to care for landscapes and to transmit the beauty of the world. People everywhere understand that we cannot continue to use the goods of the earth as we have done in the past”.*

1) **EPP is not ‘safeguarding nature’.** By leaving the negotiation table the EPP is derailing a policy process that is essential to protect and restore nature, biodiversity and ecosystem functioning in Europe. More than 1400 scientists and professionals, as well as 49 European Expert Networks and Associations, have signed a declaration stating the need for an NRL with ambitious and binding targets if we want to safeguard nature in Europe.

2) **While its core values promise to safeguard them, EPP's actions severely harm ‘future prosperity’ and ‘culture and the European way of life’.** Biodiversity collapse and the climate change crisis are core and severe threats to our well-being, health and food security. A broad scientific consensus points at the fact that to safeguard our livelihoods and a prosperous future for all, we urgently need to protect and restore nature. A recent publication in Nature warns again that seven of eight globally quantified **safe and just ‘Earth system boundaries’** are already exceeded.

3) EPP is choosing to adhere to populist narratives of the agroindustry and ignoring the science-based evidence and warnings from the scientific community which calls for the urgent

need for actions to reverse the galloping biodiversity decline. **EPP is thus exactly ‘relying on superficial ideology and communication guided by slogans and deprived of substance’.**

Different industry actors and interest groups have placed the narrative of a looming food shortage high on the agenda, arguably instrumentalising the war in Ukraine to create a false, unfounded fear to boost their economic interests, calling for a lowering of environmental and health standards, and an abandonment of EU initiatives to green the agricultural sector. The European Commission has been put under a lot of pressure, to derail the Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation and Nature Restoration Law, challenging the European Green Deal’s objectives.

To ensure long-term food security and preserve resources essential for food production, we need quite the opposite: insisting on reinforcing – and not abandoning – the protection of existing natural resources, restoration of damaged ecosystems, and the transformation towards healthy and environmentally-friendly food systems. EC’s analysis of drivers to food security points to the threat biodiversity loss poses to food security, ecosystem stability and human welfare, with 75% of global food crop types relying on animal pollination, and 84% of crop species and 78% of wildflower species depending at least in part on animal pollination. Natural pest control has been estimated to account for at least 50% of pest control occurring in crop fields.

The European Union is not only self-sufficient when it comes to food production, but is also a net exporter of agricultural products. The last Eurostat Integrated Farm Statistics (IFS) indicates that in 2020, more than half (56%) of arable land in the EU was used for animal feed. How the false narrative on ‘food security’ is abused, is also illustrated by a recent report on the production in Ecological Focus Areas (EFA’s). Derogations were granted to produce crops in EFA’s because of arguments of ‘food security’, leading to a general decrease in EFA’s of 40%. The report shows that in Austria only 0.6% of EFA was used for the production of bread grains. The remainder was used to produce maize, soybeans and sunflowers.

4) **The EPP is not representing the interest of farmers.** The Nature Restoration Law will not jeopardize farmers’ existence or the viability of their farms. Farmers need to be offered support by means of independent counselling, access to information and an IPM toolbox. The number of farms in the EU is decreasing drastically, with 5.3 million fewer farms in 2020 compared to 2005, showing the severe lack of generational renewal in Europe. Current EU policy is largely supporting the top largest farms, at the expense of small-scale farms. Farmers should be supported in adjusting to new legislation and transitioning to sustainable, long-term profitable farming that fosters healthy food production. Agricultural policy and support systems should be used to restore and protect the different ecosystem services EU’s agricultural areas provide.

5) By abandoning the negotiation process, the EPP is not working **‘towards a future-proof European health policy, prepared for the next crisis, and helping our citizens through healthy ageing’**. Links between nature, biodiversity, climate change and health are well established, with ecosystem services essential for human health and well-being.

6) In their core values, the EPP states to '**safeguard politics**', while the EPP is **boycotting democratic policy processes on a crucial part of the Green Deal**.

By leaving the negotiations on the Nature Restoration Law, the EPP is also leaving its core values, not protecting citizens', farmers' own interests and future generations, the protection and livelihood of countryside residents and not living up to its name of 'European People's Party'. We urgently ask the EPP to re-enter into constructive dialogue on this vital piece of legislation.

Sincerely,

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