



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Directorate E – Markets  
**E.1 – Governance of the agri-food markets**

**REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE GROUP  
OF EXPERTS ON THE EUROPEAN FOOD SECURITY  
CRISIS PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE MECHANISM  
(EFSCM)**

**December 2023**

# Table of Contents

<b>1.</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1.	Background and objectives of the EFSCM (European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism).....	3
1.2.	Objective and Scope of the Report .....	3
<b>2.</b>	<b>The work of the EFSCM: Activities and outputs .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1.	Composition.....	4
2.2.	Meetings .....	4
2.3.	Activities and Outputs.....	5
<b>3.</b>	<b>The State of food security in the EU.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>8</b>
	<b>Annex I: List of meetings of the EFSCM.....</b>	<b>9</b>
	<b>Annex II: EFSCM Action Plan monitoring.....</b>	<b>10</b>

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background and objectives of the EFSCM (European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism)

In light of the growing pressures on our food systems, in particular the Covid-19 pandemic, the Commission adopted on 21 November 2021 a [Communication](#) on the **Contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security in times of crisis** and established a European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism (EFSCM). A dedicated expert group on the EFSCM has been set up through a Commission [Decision](#) at the same time. In the [Communication](#) on Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems, adopted on 23 March 2022, the Commission presented a range of short-term and medium-term actions to enhance global food security and to support producers and consumers in the EU considering rising food prices and input costs (such as energy and fertilisers). The [Communication](#) on fertilisers adopted by the Commission on 9 November 2022 elaborates on the importance of ensuring availability and affordability of fertilisers, as a step towards EU’s agriculture preparedness and self-sufficiency. On 4 January 2023 the Commission [Staff working document](#) on Drivers of food security further analysed the main drivers affecting food security from both the supply and demand sides.

To implement the principles outlined in the Communication on the Contingency plan, the Commission Directorates-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE) and for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE) in co-lead, convened periodically the expert group on the EFSCM to improve the EU degree of preparedness for food security. The group was also convened in case of emergency or crisis without delay and as often as needed, to contribute to the response. Outcomes of the EFSCM in 2022 and 2023 to improve preparedness include the creation of a [Dashboard on food supply and food security](#) as well as the adoption by the EFSCM of [Recommendations on crisis communication](#) on food supply and food security as well as [Recommendations on ways to improve the diversity of sources of supply](#), among others between shorter and longer food supply chains. More information about the work of the EFSCM described in this report can be found [here](#).

### 1.2. Objective and Scope of the Report

The current report covers action nr. 3 “Periodic reporting on the state of preparedness and activities of the group of experts to other EU institutions and to the general public” of the action plan attached to the Communication on the contingency plan. This report records the state of play regarding the work of the EFSCM, by providing details on its main activities and their outputs. A part of the report is dedicated to reflecting on the state of preparedness based on data provided by the EFSCM’s work. It is the first report since the publication of the Communication, and therefore it will present a summary of all EFSCM

activities and information available since its creation until December 2023. Future reports will cover annual updates.

## 2. THE WORK OF THE EFSCM: ACTIVITIES AND OUTPUTS

The Commission convenes the group of experts periodically to improve levels of preparedness by analysing the risk landscape and the vulnerabilities as well as structural issues. The expert group aims at reinforcing coordination and collaboration between public authorities at EU and national level and with private actors of the food supply chain and input providers. This setting allows to build trust between food chain actors and institutions. Trust is essential to manage a crisis and avoid unilateral decisions that lead to sub-optimal collective outcomes.

In case of exceptional, unpredictable and large-scale events or risks that have the potential to threaten EU food supply or security, the Commission convenes the group of experts in crisis mode.

### 2.1. Composition

The members of and observers to the group of experts on the EFSCM are listed on the [Register of Commission expert groups and other similar entities](#), containing all relevant information and documents related to the functioning of this expert group. This expert group is composed of national authorities of the 27 Member States of the European Union, active in the areas of agriculture, fisheries, aquaculture, health policy or food safety. It includes as well 14 additional national authorities from non-EU countries whose food supply chains are highly integrated into that of the EU. 30 stakeholders' organisations participate as members and 16 participate as observers. These representatives provide the perspective of all stages of the food supply chain, including input providers, packaging and transport operators.

### 2.2. Meetings

Since its inception at the end of 2021, the expert group has met:

- **three times in regular mode** to enhance levels of preparedness (23 March 2022, 28 April 2023 and 29 November 2023)
- **three times in crisis mode** to discuss the impact of Russia's unprovoked aggression of Ukraine on food security and food supply in the EU (9 March 2022 and 4 May 2022) as well as the impact of the surge in energy prices and inflation on food security and food supply in the EU, including fertilisers and direct use of energy in the food supply chain (23 September 2022). For more details please see **Annex I**.
- **once** in an extraordinary setting dedicated exclusively to the Communication on **“drivers of food security”**.

- Moreover, **11 sub-group meetings** were held on the following topics:
  - o Diversification of supply sources (4),
  - o Crisis communication (3),
  - o Dashboards for food supply and food security monitoring (3) and,
  - o Mitigating risks and vulnerabilities in the food supply chains (1)

Further details on the work of the EFSCM can be found here: [https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/agri-food-supply-chain/ensuring-global-food-supply-and-food-security\\_en](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/agri-food-supply-chain/ensuring-global-food-supply-and-food-security_en)

### 2.3. Activities and Outputs

The three responsible Commission services DG AGRI, DG MARE and DG SANTE, in collaboration with the members of and observers to the group of experts on the EFSCM have been engaged in the implementation of the Action plan of the contingency plan to ensure food supply and food security in times of crisis. Seven out of nine actions outlined in the Action plan to be implemented during the period 2021-2024 have been fully completed according to schedule. For more details, please see **Annex II**.

Some of the main achievements to date include the development and adoption by the EFSCM of (i) **Recommendations on ways to improve the diversity of sources of supply**, among others between shorter and longer food supply chains and (ii) **Guidelines for crisis communication** on food supply and food security. A third set of recommendations is currently being developed on ways to address or mitigate risks and vulnerabilities, including structural issues putting at risk food supply chains. The EFSCM will adopt these recommendations by Q2/2024. To support the elaboration of such recommendations, a study mapping the risks and vulnerabilities, including structural issues, of the EU food supply chain and its critical infrastructure has been carried out by the Joint Research Centre in collaboration with an external contractor. The study, based on literature review, semi-structured interviews and an online survey, identifies the major risks threatening the EU food supply chain. The results of the study are available in the (iii) **Report on Risks and vulnerabilities in the EU Food supply chain**.

On 8 December 2022, the Commission published a (iv) **Dashboard for the monitoring of food supply and food security**. It includes a set of quantitative indicators and a collection of external sources serving as an alert system. Since its publication, the extent of data displayed has been growing continuously with additional features such as imports of fertilisers, data on inability to afford a meal and diversification of supplies which illustrate production volumes of selected food commodities in Member States. Further improvements with regard to automatization of external sources are ongoing.

The results of a bi-annual qualitative assessment carried out among members of and observers to the EFSCM supplement the data available in the Dashboard on causes, drivers, and events that could impact EU food supply and food security (looking 6 months back and 6 months ahead). The results of the first qualitative assessment were published as a **(v) on the State of Food Security in the EU: A qualitative assessment of food supply and food security in the EU within the framework of the EFSCM on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2023**. The second assessment will be launched at the beginning of 2024 and will be published in Spring.

Moreover, **the Commission** addressed a survey on the state of preparedness to national authorities being members of the EFSCM. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the country specific approaches and possible future plans. The questionnaire covered aspects related to strategic reserves and other crisis prevention policies, as well as rules to address specific shortages and governance. In this 2023 survey, 19 EU Member States and 7 Non-EU countries provided insights into different methodologies, frameworks, and strategies for food security. The questionnaire aimed at collecting information regarding concerns and a broad number of topics, such as listing products sensitive to shortage, foresight, instruments, and actions available in case of crisis, strengths and weaknesses, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and war in Ukraine among others. As it was not completed by all members, the Commission invited Member States to send further contributions and will report on it in 2024.

### **3. THE STATE OF FOOD SECURITY IN THE EU: MAIN OBSERVATIONS**

Food security is currently at the forefront of the political agenda, both at the EU and at global level. **Ensuring the availability of and access to food for consumers at reasonable prices** are objectives set out in Article 39 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). As mentioned in the Contingency Plan, achieving such objective cannot be taken for granted. Ensuring a fair standard of living for the farming, fishing and aquaculture communities is of paramount importance for food production.

Over the years, the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)** has played an important role in ensuring food security for over 450 million European citizens. In fisheries and aquaculture, the **Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)** ensures that fishing and aquaculture activities are sustainable and contribute to provide Europeans with nutritional food. These policies also contribute to global food security.

In recent years, the effects of climate change and environmental degradation, the global economic disruptions stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and other geopolitical uncertainties have destabilised global food supply chains **and are intensifying food insecurity risks and vulnerabilities across the world, including in the EU.**

While **food availability is currently not at stake in the EU**, since the Union is a net exporter for many food products, it is a net importer of specific agri-food and fish products, in particular feed, fish and aquaculture products. This dependency, together with a dependency on key inputs generating high costs, such as fertilisers and fossil energy, has caused production challenges for producers and has been contributing to increased food prices.

The activities and outputs of the work of the **EFSCM** during the last two years are examples of actions to enhance preparedness and the EFSCM provides a comprehensive forum to identify and discuss bottlenecks at an early stage, thus contributing to an improved response by all public and private actors.

In November 2023 the European Commission prepared the first edition of the [State of Food Security in the EU](#) based on contributions by EFSCM members and observers. The report focuses on the main issues of concerns that respondents of the survey had highlighted. First, the (i) **growing concerns of recurring extreme weather events in the EU**, mainly floods and droughts, are considered alarming factors potentially threatening food supply. (ii) Lower EU production due to extreme weather events could increase **the need for imports** to ensure food supply and **create pressure on length and cost of logistics**. These additional costs could then further pressure consumer prices, (iii) **price volatility** and the search for alternative products could be seen as potential constraints for food supply. As a consequence of Russia's aggression of Ukraine, respondents further perceive the (iv) **continued high input prices and production costs** as drivers for an accelerated change in business structures. Overall, small and medium-sized holdings are considered to face more challenges in that respect, some of them quoting reports on curtailing and closure of activity due to high input prices.

(v) **Food affordability** remains a key concern for food security in the EU. Since food inflation is considered a significant threat to food security in the EU, the vulnerability of certain income groups of consumers to food price increases, characterised by their inability to buy food and in particular healthy or more sustainable food, deserves particular attention. To support food security (vi) respondents highlight **the importance of joint and co-ordinated actions**, such as reinforcing co-ordinated facilitation of logistics or avoiding isolated un-coordinated national interventions that would result in the fragmentation of the Single Market. Looking ahead, most of the respondents of the expert group on the EFSCM expect **current risks to persist in the next six months**, in particular the frequency of extreme weather events, and the unpredictability of how the Russian invasion of Ukraine will evolve.

Information and the availability of **adequate data** are key when it comes to food crisis **preparedness and response**. To enhance the level of preparedness in that respect, the Action Plan accompanying the Communication on the Contingency plan includes a **study on the role of information technologies to improve market transparency, in particular**

**in times of crisis.** This study is currently being carried out, results are expected to be available by end of 2024.

The EFSCM guidelines for crisis communication confirm the importance of effective and efficient communication that relies on transparent and evidence-based information, obtained from trusted sources in times of crises. Another set of recommendations provided by the EFSCM highlights that diversification is paramount in ensuring food security and food supply in times of crisis. Attention must be brought to the diversification of sources of supply to public authorities and private actors involved in the EU food supply chain. Policy coherence and an enabling regulatory environment constitute keys of managing or mitigating a crisis and evolving EU's state of preparedness.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The current geopolitical situation and its consequences demonstrate the importance of ensuring food security at all times, globally and within the EU. This objective, enshrined in our founding Treaties over 65 years ago, is today as important as ever.

The resilience of the EU food supply chain has ensured that the availability of food in the EU was and is not at risk, neither during the Covid-19 pandemic, nor since the beginning of the Russian aggression of Ukraine. The food supply chain has been supported by a series of well-functioning emergency instruments embedded in the EU policy framework to ensure food security in the EU: the Common Agricultural Policy, the Common Fisheries Policy, the Food Law, State Aids and the Single Market, just to mention a few.

The EFSCM functioned as a dedicated communication channel in times of crisis on issues related to the food supply chain between public authorities and all types of private actors involved in the supply of food in the EU. Moreover, as outlined in this report, the EFSCM has been contributing to the improvement of the state of preparedness of the EU through a series of actions. The Mechanism will continue beyond the accomplishment of the implementation of its initial Action plan.



## ANNEX I: LIST OF MEETINGS OF THE EFSCM

Date	Type of meeting	Type of group	Agenda and relevant documents
9 March 2022	1 <sup>st</sup> ad-hoc	Expert Group	<a href="#">1st ad-hoc meeting of the Expert Group on the European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism</a>
23 March 2022	1 <sup>st</sup> regular	Expert Group	<a href="#">European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism</a>
4 May 2022	2 <sup>nd</sup> ad-hoc	Expert Group	<a href="#">European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism</a>
31 May 2022	1 <sup>st</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Dashboard for the monitoring of food supply and security</a>
27 June 2022	1 <sup>st</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Improving the diversity of sources of supply</a>
18 July 2022	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Dashboard for the monitoring of food supply and security</a>
23 September 2022	3 <sup>rd</sup> ad-hoc	Expert Group	<a href="#">European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism</a>
14 October 2022	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Improving the diversity of sources of supply</a>
24 October 2022	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Dashboard for the monitoring of food supply and security</a>
14 November 2022	extraordinary	Expert Group	<a href="#">European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism</a>
15 December 2022	1 <sup>st</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Crisis communication on food supply and food security</a>
30 January 2023	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Improving the diversity of sources of supply</a>
28 February 2023	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Crisis communication on food supply and food security</a>
17 March 2023	4 <sup>th</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Improving the diversity of sources of supply</a>
30 March 2023	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Crisis communication on food supply and food security</a>
28 April 2023	2 <sup>nd</sup> regular	Expert Group	<a href="#">2nd regular meeting of the Expert Group on the European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism</a>
18 October 2023	1 <sup>st</sup>	Subgroup	<a href="#">Subgroup “Mitigating risks and vulnerabilities in the food supply chains” – 1st meeting</a>
29 November 2023	3 <sup>rd</sup> regular	Expert Group	<a href="#">3rd regular meeting of the Expert Group on the European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism</a>

## ANNEX II: EFSCM ACTION PLAN MONITORING

	Actions	Delivered by	State of play by December 2023
1	Establish a permanent European Food Security Crisis preparedness and response Mechanism (EFSCM) including a dedicated group of experts involving public authorities from Member States (MS) and non-EU countries as well as stakeholders and its rules of procedures.	Q2/2022	✓
2	Create a network of correspondents from the relevant private sector organisations.	Q4/2022	✓
3	Periodic reporting on the state of preparedness and activities of the group of experts to other EU institutions and to the general public.	Yearly, as from end 2022	✓
4	Convoke the group of experts regularly and on an ad hoc basis in case of a crisis threatening food supply and food security in the EU.	At least yearly as from Q2/2022	✓
5	Establish the appropriate digital platform to support the EFSCM for exchange of information.	Q4/2022	✓
6	Map the risks and vulnerabilities, including structural issues, of the EU food supply chain and its critical infrastructures among others through a dedicated study.	Q4/2023	✓
7	Develop specific dashboards for the monitoring of food supply and food security.	Q4/2022	✓
8	Carry out a study on the role of information technologies to improve market transparency, in particular in times of crisis.	Q4/2024	Ongoing
9	Develop recommendations:		
	- on ways to reinforce the diversity of sources of supply between shorter and longer food supply chains;	Q2/2023	✓
	- on guidelines for crisis communication on food supply and food security;	Q2/2023	✓
	- on ways to address or mitigate risks and vulnerabilities, including structural issues putting at risk food supply chains.	Q2/2024	Ongoing