

## **Joint declaration of the SCAR members on the 5<sup>th</sup> Foresight Exercise on**

### **“Natural resources and food systems: Transitions towards a ‘safe and just’ operating space”**

***The Members of the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) incorporating EU member states and associated countries:***

***Acknowledge*** that humanity is neither in a ‘safe’ nor ‘just’ operating space. Climate change is accelerating, biodiversity is declining, land is degrading and soil health and water quality are deteriorating. Inequalities are rising; hunger is increasing again as are obesity rates and diet-related non-communicable diseases. Population growth is exacerbating all these problems, particularly among the most vulnerable groups, contributing to mass migrations and political tensions.

***Consider*** that a drastic transformation of the way we produce and consume food and exploit natural resources is necessary, as incremental improvements are no longer sufficient. At the same time, it is necessary to increase resilience to stressors and shocks, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

***Welcome*** the experts’ work on the 5<sup>th</sup> SCAR Foresight on “Natural resources and food systems: transitions towards a ‘safe and just’ operating space”. ***Recognise*** the crucial importance of the three transition pathways identified: i) sustainable and healthy diets for all, ii) circularity in the use of resources and iii) greater diversity of farming and food systems – for organising and prioritising research agendas and for the development of policies.

***Emphasise*** that the targets set by the European Green Deal are ambitious, but in the SCAR experts’ opinion, more efforts and resources are required to reach true sustainability. The policy debate should be focused on the three identified transition pathways.

***Urge*** the reshaping of national and EU policies based on common understanding of the three proposed transition pathways and their potential in affecting the European food systems.

***Highlight*** the fact that the systemic changes that are needed are disproportionate relative to the availability of resources at European or at national level and that, there is an urgent need for converging pathways. Consequently, a global agreement is required to encourage individual countries to change their own policies towards greater attention to environmental, climatic, social and economic concerns towards a more sustainable food and bioeconomy sector.

***Agree** with SCAR Foresight experts that in the current economic climate, natural capital, environmental and social costs are undervalued and that the socio-economic outcome of sustainable systems should be based on true cost accounting.*

***Support** global agreements on sustainable food systems, which requires the acknowledgement of lock-ins and levers, trade-offs and synergies related to national food and bioeconomy policies, European policies, global trade policies and international agreements.*

***Notes** the important role of long-term network building to implement the new impact driven approach of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme, including developing partnerships and missions.*

***Highlight** that the partnerships and missions require strong cooperation of the member states and the associated countries with the support of the European Commission. The discussions should extend beyond the remit of research and innovation policy to involve the range of sectorial and horizontal policies, always in a multi-actor approach between funders, policy-makers, and stakeholders including practitioners. As all the main policies are interconnected, **advise** a strong coordinated approach to reach the ultimate goal of a “safe and just” operating space.*

***Stress** that new science-policy-society interfaces are required to reach the “safe and just” operating space. The research and innovation framework programmes at European and national level need to reinforce strong collaborative projects (partnerships, multi-actor projects).*

***Underscore** that a pre-requisite to the transitions relies in societal understanding of the meaning of a “safe and just operating space” and agreeing on the related priorities. Specific consideration should be given to vulnerable groups, including farmers/fishers/foresters and rural communities, which the transition pathways may affect negatively. Therefore, social and human sciences research dealing with innovation need to be strengthened.*

***Stress** that all policies, including research and innovation policies, shall consider the local and territorial dimension as a predominant factor. **Emphasise** that strengthening diversity of production systems at local and regional level is key for creating overall resilient, healthy, sustainable and inclusive European food systems, respectful of planetary boundaries.*

***Underline** that in order to navigate through the transitions, the role of European comitology such as SCAR is essential in supporting transformative research and innovation agendas - to be implemented in synergy with long-term policy strategies.*