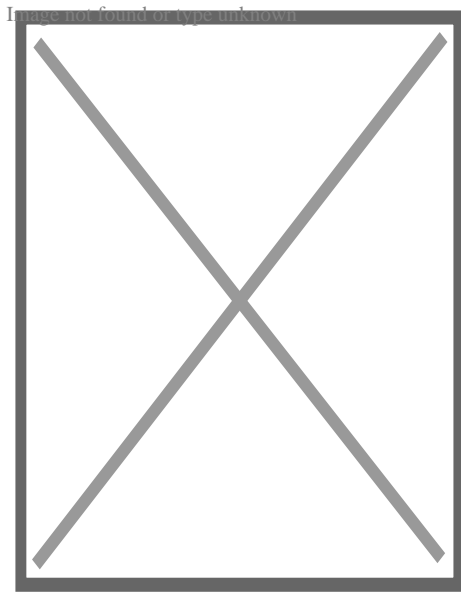


## Viewpoint: ‘Why farmers are essential partners in the fight against climate change’

**T**he “Farm to Fork” strategy is an important part of the EU [Green Deal](#). As a farmer, I endorse the view that we should do everything at our command to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in all spheres of our life to the best of our ability.

Farmers, due to the adverse impact of climate change, find ourselves in a tricky Catch 22 situation. Unlike other sectors of society, we the farmers have the most important obligation to feed the world. We must produce enough food to feed all and it must be nutritious.



Concerns about climate change fuels much of the EU’s ambitions in this plan. However, a lack of understanding of modern agriculture often places the blame on farmers for the problem of greenhouse gases rather than a solution. In fact, we tend to think and care about the climate more than most people.

That’s because the weather and climate drive our success or failure. For farmers, weather reports are necessary to help us make basic decisions about planting, fertilization, and harvesting. The extreme weather of droughts, floods, and monsoons—the worst effects of climate change—can put us out of business.

This makes farmers essential partners in the fight against climate change.

We must balance dealing with the challenges of climate change with the need to produce abundant and affordable food, which is the fundamental purpose of agriculture. This equilibrium is especially important here in India as we surpass China with 1.4 billion people.

In the crusade to mitigate climate change, we cannot allow food security to become a casualty. Unfortunately, this is one of the unintended consequences of the current proposals within the EU's Green Deal and directly impacts my farm in India as well as others in much of Asia and Africa.

Part of the Green Deal's "Farm to Fork" strategy involves embracing an organic-only farming system and rejects the safe science-based methods of biotechnology and crop protection. By 2030, the Green Deal aims to have one-quarter of all EU agriculture transition to organic and to slash the use of crop-protection products in half.

While I respect the fact that Europeans should decide what makes sense for them, I encourage everyone to look at last year's [crisis in Sri Lanka](#) – a result of very similar decisions being made as those proposed in the current EU legislation.

Europe's decisions, however, won't occur in isolation. They will also become my problem because the EU's choices are likely to influence and harm the policies of my own country as well as in the rest of the developing world.

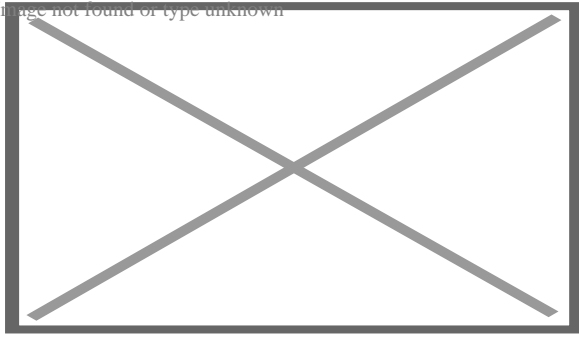
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Many of India's NGOs are based in Europe and take their cues

from the EU's priorities. They routinely attack science-based farming practices, and they've blocked Indian farmers from enjoying access to GM crops, such as brinjal and mustard. The only GM crop we're allowed to grow is cotton—and this amazing technology has helped farmers to produce more cotton on less land than ever before, even while using fewer chemicals. On my own farm, GM cotton has allowed me to reduce my use of these environmentally safe crop protection products by 75 percent. Yet, EU-driven activists have persuaded our government from applying the lessons of this climate-friendly triumph of sustainability to other areas.

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Moreover, the EU's rules indirectly affect its trade policies,

meaning that food products grown in the developing world and imported into European markets increasingly must meet the EU's -sometime unrealistic – regulations. India, for example, exports large amounts of fresh fruit, tea, spices, and rice to customers in Europe—but often we face non-tariff barriers that exclude perfectly safe products. In 2018, the EU rejected massive amounts of rice from India because it contained trace elements of a safe fungicide that keeps crops healthy. Similar disputes have arisen more recently and are ongoing.

If we're going to meet the twin goals of fighting climate change and feeding a world of more than 8 billion people, we're going to have to remember that sustainability and productivity can be achieved together. This is best realized when policy makers accept the innovations and technologies that allow our crops to thrive and allow farmers to access these tools.

The Green Deal imagines a brighter environmental future. A future that any farmer I have ever met dreams of as well. But an agenda that is climate friendly shouldn't also be food hostile.

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