



**mouvement
écologique**

20 million euros in state funding for new greenhouses:

Orientation towards large-scale facilities and lack of sustainability criteria overshadow initiative to grow more fruit and vegetables in Luxembourg

Recently, Minister of Agriculture Martine Hansen presented a legislative project¹ to diversify agriculture. The aim is to increase Luxembourg's low level of self-sufficiency in fruit and vegetables. The ministry wants to use an "appel à projets" to allocate 20 million euros in subsidies to build new greenhouses for growing tomatoes, strawberries and the like.

At the same time, a full-day conference *entitled "Lëtzebuurger Geméisbaudag"* will take place tomorrow, Thursday 16 January.

Our organisation has been advocating the diversification of Luxembourg's agriculture and vegetable cultivation for decades.

The fact that there is now a legislative project to promote the cultivation of fruit and vegetables in greenhouses and that a corresponding all-day event is taking place may seem extremely positive at first glance.

Unfortunately, however, the fact that the topic is finally being addressed is overshadowed by the fundamental orientation of both the legislative project and the conference programme.

Three problems in particular stand out:

- **Vegetable and fruit cultivation without specific cultivation criteria:** Neither the legal text itself nor the conference focussed on cultivation conditions! In fact, the legal text does not define any cultivation criteria at all, and there is not a single corresponding presentation at the conference (out of a total of 9 presentations!). It is well known that vegetable cultivation - depending on how it is carried out - can be associated with extremely high water and energy consumption as well as a considerable use of pesticides. The aim of promoting organic farming is also not achieved in this way.
- **Promotion of small-scale, medium-sized and family-run agriculture or the agricultural industry:** According to the legislative project, only operators of greenhouses with a subsidy requirement of at least €1 million (i.e. an investment of at least €2.5 million) are to be subsidised. An applicant should be able to receive up to €12 million. This means that small-scale agriculture will not be subsidised, but rather industrial production!

- **Lack of implementation provisions for the selection criteria:** The legislative project also lacks transparent specifications as to which detailed criteria may be used to favour one project over another. This means that there is a certain degree of arbitrariness on the part of the state; at the very least, the applicant does not know sufficiently which projects will or will not be primarily subsidised by the state.

Numerous questions arise:

- How does the project in this form benefit Luxembourg's agriculture today?
- Does it help to attract young farmers and career changers to the farming profession? Does it support existing family farms that are looking to diversify their activities by passing them on to the next generation? Does it create new sources of income for existing farms?
- Does it contribute to promoting the objectives of the Organic Action Plan?
- Does it also contribute to the preservation of biodiversity or will it rather lead to a further deterioration of the situation, as an increased use of pesticides is to be expected, a green zone may be sealed and water consumption will increase?
- Is the legislative project even legally tenable in this form?

Unfortunately, the Mouvement Ecologique's response to the current legislative project is the same for all socio-political objectives: No, the current version of the law does not make any of these positive contributions!

Among other things:

- The cultivation conditions are defined in terms of sustainable cultivation methods;
- Small-scale cultivation should also be promoted and not just large greenhouses.

And as important as the issues addressed at the "Geméisbaudag" are (food contact materials, etc.), it is just too crass that these aspects are not the focus of the conference (at least according to the programme)

Conclusion of the current approach: to date, the approach has been of no benefit to Luxembourg's agriculture or the environment.

The risk of the current approach: Instead of importing vegetables from Holland, which may be grown using energy and water-intensive pesticides, the customer could now buy equally controversial products from Luxembourg.

Or to put it more radically: it should be clear: The limited area of Luxembourg should not have to be used for sprayed strawberries in December, should it?

This legislative project should actually make a contribution to future-oriented, small-scale agriculture based on sustainability criteria and offer new development prospects for farmers. These goals will not be achieved. On the contrary: the 20 million euros of taxpayers' money invested risk being spent to the detriment of these goals.

Mouvement Ecologique asbl, 15 January 2025

ⁱ <https://legilux.public.lu/eli/dl/pl/2024/265>