



SALV & the implementation of Agenda 2030 (SDGs)

The Strategic Advisory Council for Agriculture and Fisheries (SALV), a formal representative body of stakeholders of the agriculture and food sector of Flanders, has recognized the Sustainable Development Goals as an invaluable framework to analyze and identify future improvements regarding the sustainability of agriculture and fisheries sectors. This recognition proved not to be idle as the SALV subsequently identified the relation between the SDGs and the Flemish agricultural policy (1) and concretized the results of this research in several recommendations to the Flemish Government (2).

1 Research on goalsetting and implementation

Research conducted by dr. Andrew Enow in the context of his apprenticeship at SALV identified relevant Sustainable Development Goals from the perspective of agriculture, and their emanation in objectives frameworks set in existing long term government policies towards 2050¹. Attention was also paid to determine suitable indicators to measure progress on sustainable development according to the SDG framework. Perspectives drawn from a critical comparison between Belgian and European indicator sets enabled the proposition of Flemish indicators to monitor and evaluate sustainable development of agriculture and fisheries sectors in Flanders.² This research subsequently functioned as the theoretical starting point from which the SALV formulated several formal recommendations to the Flemish Government. Hence the advisory council was able to provide the government with indispensable stakeholder supported viewpoints on the opportunities, challenges and progress of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The SALV recommendation on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the uptake of the SDG framework by the Flemish Government presented the most relevant SDGs for agriculture and fisheries. This selection was based upon the European Commission's viewpoints with respect to the connection between the SDGs and the upcoming Common Agricultural Policy 2021-2027:

- SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere
- SDG 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture
- SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages
- SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all
- SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls
- SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all

¹ [VR, Visie 2050. Een langetermijnstrategie voor Vlaanderen, Brussel, 2016.](#)

² SALV, *Stagerapport. Analyse van de Verenigde Naties' Sustainable Development Goals 2030 in relatie tot het Vlaamse landbouwbeleid*, Brussel, 2018.

- SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all
- SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all
- SDG 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation
- SDG 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable
- SDG 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns
- SDG 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts
- SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- SDG 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Based upon this selection of SDGs by the European Commission (i.e. specifically those related to agriculture), the SALV already advocated in a joint recommendation with the Flemish advisory council for environmental and nature protection policy (Minaraad) the necessity of a coherent, comprehensive and ambitious transposition of the SDGs in order to ensure effective implementation by the EU policy level.³ In line with this recommendation, the SALV further outlined recommendations to the Flemish Government with respect to the translation of SDGs in the scope of the economy, environment and society of Flanders (cf. infra).

2 Towards recommendations

The SALV advised the Flemish Government on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda with respect to:

- the proper translation of the actual SDGs in regional policy objectives from the viewpoint of agriculture and fisheries (i.e. the *Vizier 2030* vision note of the Flemish Government)⁴
- the relation between these ambitions and the more practical outlines of agriculture and fisheries policies in Flanders (i.e. the preparations for the introduction of the upcoming Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) 2021-2027 and the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) 2021-2027).⁵

In doing so, the SALV paid attention to **policy coherence** (procedural aspects) (see 2.1) as well as the proper **content** of the proposed policy objectives (see 2.2).

³ [SALV and Minaraad, Joint Recommendation. CAP post 2020 – The Future of Food and Farming, Brussels, 2018](#), p. 6.

⁴ [VR, Vizier 2030. Een 2030-doelstellingenkader voor Vlaanderen, Brussel, 2019](#).

⁵ [SALV, Advies. Een strategie voor het Vlaams landbouwbeleid 2021-2027. Aanbevelingen bij de ontwerpstrategienota, Brussel, 2019](#); [SALV, Advies. Ontwerpstrategie operationeel programma visserij en aquacultuur 2021-2027, Brussel, 2019](#).

2.1 General recommendations: policy coherence

The *Vizier 2030* vision note of the Flemish Government expresses how Flanders will deal with the implementation of the SDGs in the specific context of its own economy, society and environment. The SALV asks that government bodies (in particular those responsible for agriculture and fisheries) consequently account for the policy objectives expressed in the *Vizier 2030* vision note when new policy initiatives are undertaken in the domains of agriculture and fisheries. Such a plea for policy coherence was incorporated in the SALV recommendations on the introduction of the future CAP and the design for a new fisheries public financing program EMFF in Flanders.⁶ Vice versa the overarching policy objectives of *Vizier 2030* should according to the SALV take into account the specific context in which Flemish agriculture and fisheries operate as well as the initiatives that already have been taken to contribute to economic, social and environmental sustainability of these sectors. In the SALV recommendation about the *Vizier 2030* vision note, the SALV means that the general objectives formulated for the agriculture, horticulture and agrofood sectors can be considered as a general point of departure but are still in need of further sector oriented elaboration. When decisive answers to current policy developments (such as CAP 2021-2027, spatial planning policies,...) are formulated and after Pact 2020 indicators are thoroughly evaluated, the advisory council asks to add specific agricultural objectives to *Vizier 2030*.⁷

2.2 Specific recommendations: content

From the perspective of **agriculture**, the SALV recommended that **agricultural income formation** should have more centre stage in the objective of sustainable farm production and farming practices of the *Vizier 2030* vision note. Objective 19 of *Vizier 2030* states that Flanders engages that by 2030 '*sustainable food production systems have been guaranteed and resilient farming practices implemented that are able to increase productivity and production*'. However, a sole increase in productivity and production does not guarantee a better income for farmers. Yet a better income position serves as precondition for (1) sustainable and resilient agricultural production within environmental boundaries and (2) farm business continuity. Furthermore, the SALV means that the concept of 'sustainability' in agriculture cannot and should not be narrowed to farming only but instead should encompass the entire agro-food chain.⁸ As a result of the advice of the SALV, objective 19 has been adjusted and now includes better agricultural income formation. As it stands, Flanders shall engage that by 2030 '*sustainable food production systems have been guaranteed and resilient farming practices implemented that are able to increase productivity and production, and to guarantee a sufficient income*'.

The line of thought of the *Vizier 2030* recommendation was then further elaborated in a recommendation of the advisory council on the preparation of the strategic directions of the future Common Agricultural Policy in Flanders. The vision of this CAP strategic plan, as voiced in a draft note of the Agriculture and Fisheries Department (which is not yet politically approved), implicitly

⁶ Ibidem.

⁷ [VR, Vizier 2030. Een 2030-doelstellingenkader voor Vlaanderen, Brussel, 2019](#), p. 21.

⁸ Ibidem.

confirms the value of **pluralism** within the agriculture and horticulture sector: resilient agricultural business models exist alongside each other and all work up to a sustainable agrosystem. The SALV considers this a positive strategic option as long as the diversity of co-existing agricultural revenue models withstand **a check on (integrated) sustainable development**. In line with the *Vizier 2030* recommendation, the SALV recommends to consider **a fair and attractive income** for **'real farmers'** rewarding their efforts to deliver **products and services** as a key element in reaching a sustainable agro and food-system.

With respect to the **fisheries** sector, the SALV argues that the fisheries objective of the *Vizier 2030* vision note is in need of reconsideration. After all it does not account for the specific context in which the Flemish fisheries sector operates and does not recognize the efforts that already have been taken in the light of sustainability enhancement by the sector. Yet, the fisheries objective (objective 41) has not been changed in the final document of *Vizier 2030* according to SALV recommendations. The fisheries objective states that *'by 2030 fishing shall be regulated in an effective way and scientifically based management plans shall be implemented to restore fish stocks as quick as possible, at least to levels that guarantee a maximum sustainable yield corresponding to their biological characteristics.'*⁹ Hence, the advisory council continued to request adequate attention to context and efforts of the fisheries sector with regard to this objective of *Vizier 2030*. In the SALV recommendation on the policy preparations for a new fisheries financial program EMFF 2021-2027 (as conceived by the Agriculture and Fisheries Department, and not yet politically approved) as well as in the SALV priority setting for fisheries policy of the Flemish Government 2019-2024,¹⁰ the council asks for such a translation of objective 41 that a coherent and clear policy framework around Flemish fisheries will come forward. Such a coherent policy framework shall recognize the specific context of the Flemish fisheries sector as well as its past sustainability enhancing efforts.

Concerning **food waste** (thus encompassing both farming and fishing sectors), the SALV noted that objective 33 of *Vizier 2030*, that prescribes a food waste reduction of 30 per cent by 2030, should already be obtained by 2025 according to agreements made between partners in the food chain (i.e. *Ketenroadmap Voedselverlies 2015-2020*). The council means that when the agreement of the *Ketenroadmap* has been updated and new goals set, the *Vizier 2030* objective should equally be adjusted.

3 Concluding remark

Both general and specific recommendations outlined above show that the SALV, by means of stakeholders supported viewpoints, appreciates the SDG objectives framework as a way to enhance sustainability, yet at the same time argues that accountability for regional circumstances (of agriculture and fisheries in this case) is indispensable for its future success.

⁹ [VR, Vizier 2030. Een 2030-doelstellingenkader voor Vlaanderen, Brussel, 2019](#), p. 16.

¹⁰ [SALV, Advies. Ontwerpstrategie operationeel programma visserij en aquacultuur 2021-2027, Brussel, 2019](#), p. 7-8; [SALV, Advies. Prioriteitennota Visserij 2019-2024](#), p. 8-9.