

REPORT

1st Future Dialogue – the need of a more active economic policy

- 21 december 2021

On December 14, 2021 in collaboration with [BAAE](#) the SALV organised the first in a series of future dialogues on a sustainable future for agriculture in Flanders. Subject of this webinar was the European directive that aims to curb unfair trading behaviour in the agri-food chain (on which the SALV earlier this year made recommendations) and which additional measures are needed to enforce the socio-economic position of farmers.

A commonly raised argument was that we need a more active economic policy in the area of agriculture to improve incomes of farmers and make food production more sustainable. To curb unfair trading practices by law-making is an important step towards a stronger position of primary producers and small and medium sized enterprises in the agri-food chain vis-à-vis the large actors at the end of the chain that have a lot of market power. This initiative shall have to be further elaborated in order to guarantee *'a fair share of the cake'* to the first links in the chain.

In addition, the *'size of the cake'* will have to be somewhat bigger. Irresponsible promotion is giving consumers the feeling that sustainable food hasn't got value anymore. The government should put a halt to this. A resulting small improvement of the margins would make a big difference for farmers' incomes and the route to more sustainable food production. In order to get firm grips on the *size* as well as the *share*, a more active economic policy is needed. Amongst others, a policy of more actively correcting the market interplay might be worth looking at.

After this 1st dialogue on agriculture and economics, the SALV plans 4 other future dialogues in 2022, each on a challenge topic with respect to a sustainable future of agriculture in Flanders (as earlier [identified by the SALV](#)): agriculture and multifunctional open space conditions, agriculture and the environment/climate, agriculture and future events and changes, agriculture and acceptance by society.