

## **FFA2016: Fighting climate change means 'transforming world economy', says top American economist**

Written by Brian Johnson and Julie Levy-Abegnoli on 25 March 2016 in Feature  
Feature

None of Europe's current environmental problems are unsolvable, but they will require changes on an unprecedented scale, according to Earth Institute director Jeffrey Sachs.



Leading economist and poverty eradication expert Jeffrey Sachs was in Brussels this week to speak at the ninth annual Forum for the Future of Agriculture (FFA).

He told attendees that when it comes to countries fulfilling their commitments to Agenda 2030 and the UN's sustainable development goals, "there is no international court except public opinion. This is a global contract that can only be honoured if we understand why we entered it."

He said that while his native US faced many environmental challenges, "Europe, too, has a lot of work to do on its own agriculture" before it can be truly sustainable.

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While some have hailed biofuels as the future of sustainable agriculture, Sachs dismissed these as a "gimmick", explaining that in the US they are considered, "an absolute rip-off of ecosystems. I am deeply sceptical that biofuels are a viable approach for Europe. The homework hasn't been done on biofuels."

Sachs argued that farm systems were in trouble across the world, in part due to reliance on free market principles and - particularly in the US - to what he called the "pay to play" politics of Washington DC.

He said that, "none of Europe's current environmental problems are unsolvable, but they require a roadmap", which the EU currently lacks. He noted that the continent, "still has a chance to get things right, but is very lobby-focused and very much in crisis management mode. This makes it hard to come up with a long-term plan."

Sachs also warned that, "Climate change will kill us unless we get it under control." The way to do so, he said, was to change our economic model in a way that is, "unprecedented in complexity, scale and speed with which this needs to happen."

The severity of global warming is such that, "we are on a path of climate disaster", said Sachs. "We are on a trajectory to reach temperatures the earth hasn't seen in 130,000 years. How is our food supply going to do in that context? Not well. This will lead to more pests, draughts, floods, and extreme events - huge problems everywhere."

He stressed that, "we must solve these problems, and doing so requires planning, foresight, expertise and democratic engagement. Not one of these is solvable on a time horizon of less than a generation. This is not about an election cycle or a quick win; it's about transforming a world economy which is hugely productive."

## About the author

Brian Johnson is managing editor of the Parliament Magazine

Julie Levy-Abegnoli is a journalist for the Parliament Magazine

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