

Framing Food & Farming

**FRAMING
MATTERS**

**EU FOOD
POLICY
COALITION**



What is its purpose?

This toolkit will introduce the concepts of framing and narrative and show how these concepts can be applied to improve our communications. There are clear examples of how to better frame food and farming issues in your work.

EXPLORE THE FULL TOOLKIT



How was this toolkit created?

- Scoping report based on Framing Matters analysis of communications material provided by EU FPC coalition members
- Workshop with EU FPC members
- EU FPC steering group & participants feedback



Key framing issues

And how to
address them



1

Highlight the damage industrial agriculture can do without alienating farmers.

2

Stop fuelling the food security debate.

3

Be clear about the role of the public in supporting our work.

1

Highlight the damage industrial agriculture can do, without alienating farmers

① THE PROBLEM – THE TERMS WE USE

✓ THE SOLUTION

Use separate terms for the **farming we support** ('farming') and the **large corporate exploitation** we don't.

- > *Corporate food production*
- > *Industrialisation of the countryside*
- > *Industrial [or industrialised] agriculture*
- > *Exploitative agriculture*
- > *Big ag*
- > *Big meat [and dairy]*
- > *Agri industry*
- > *Factory produced food*
- > *[Big] Agribusiness / big ag monopolies*
- > *Industrial [or industrialised] food production*

IMAGERY TO SUPPORT “GOOD FARMING”

Imagery is also a key part of addressing this issue – and can ignite strong frames in an audience.



Images of farmers



Images of “good farming”

✓ **THE SOLUTION**

IMAGERY TO HIGHLIGHT CORPORATE FOOD PRODUCTION

Use imagery that shows both the inhuman scale of the operations and their industrial nature. Think: animal factories, huge monocultures, spraying toxic chemicals, land and water pollution, junk foods. Wherever possible compare pictures of industrial food production against farming.



THE SOLUTION



2

**Stop fuelling the
food security debate**

✓ THE SOLUTION

Pivot away from the issue of food security to the one you think really matters.

We must make sure we highlight the true cause of the problem we talk about, otherwise it makes it appear unfixable and inevitable.



✓ THE SOLUTION



DO SAY



- *Big agribusiness is distracting us from the real problem while trying to further industrialise the countryside to make more money.*
- *The unfair distribution of food, caused by the actions of big business and governments, mean that some people have excess while others are unable to access the food they need.*

✓ THE SOLUTION

Use an alternative term

- > *Food access*
- > *Food availability*
- > *Healthy food shared equally*
- > *Fair access to food*
- > *Good food accessible to all*

3

**Be clear about the
role of the public in
supporting our work**



**DON'T
SAY**
—

- × *Our organisation has sent several letters allowing us to meet with the Commission and put forward our concerns.*
- × *We are one of the biggest and most influential networks with 200 members.*



DO SAY



- *Over 1000 people have joined the campaign for banning dangerous chemicals, we are taking their concerns to the Commission. Together we can make change happen.*
- *Together with our membership we are a positive force for change, we have over 1000 members working with us to make change happen.*

<https://xkcd.com/simplewriter/>

➤ *Create a sentence explaining:*

1) the food and farming we want

OR

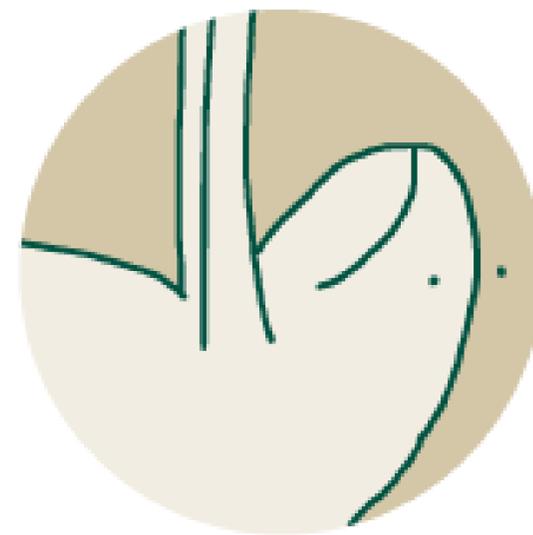
2) the corporate food production we don't want

➤ **NO RED WORDS**

Framing traps

And how to avoid them





[RAT TRAP]

**Drop the jargon
and use terms your
audience understands**

Avoid the rat trap
Don't use language that
your audience doesn't
think about/understand
in the way you do.





THE RAT OR ASSUMPTION TRAP

DON'T SAY



What it means



DO SAY

Fertilisers, insecticides, herbicides, antimicrobials [and maybe pesticides?]

Harmful chemicals are grouped by scientists and corporations by function. But they are quite technical and sound scientific, using these same terms might not be beneficial to us (see also the chameleon section).

Harmful chemicals, toxic chemicals, poisonous chemicals

Synthetic pesticide-free and bee-friendly agriculture

Describing types of chemicals and farming that are better for wildlife and the environment.

Chemical free farming, bee friendly farming



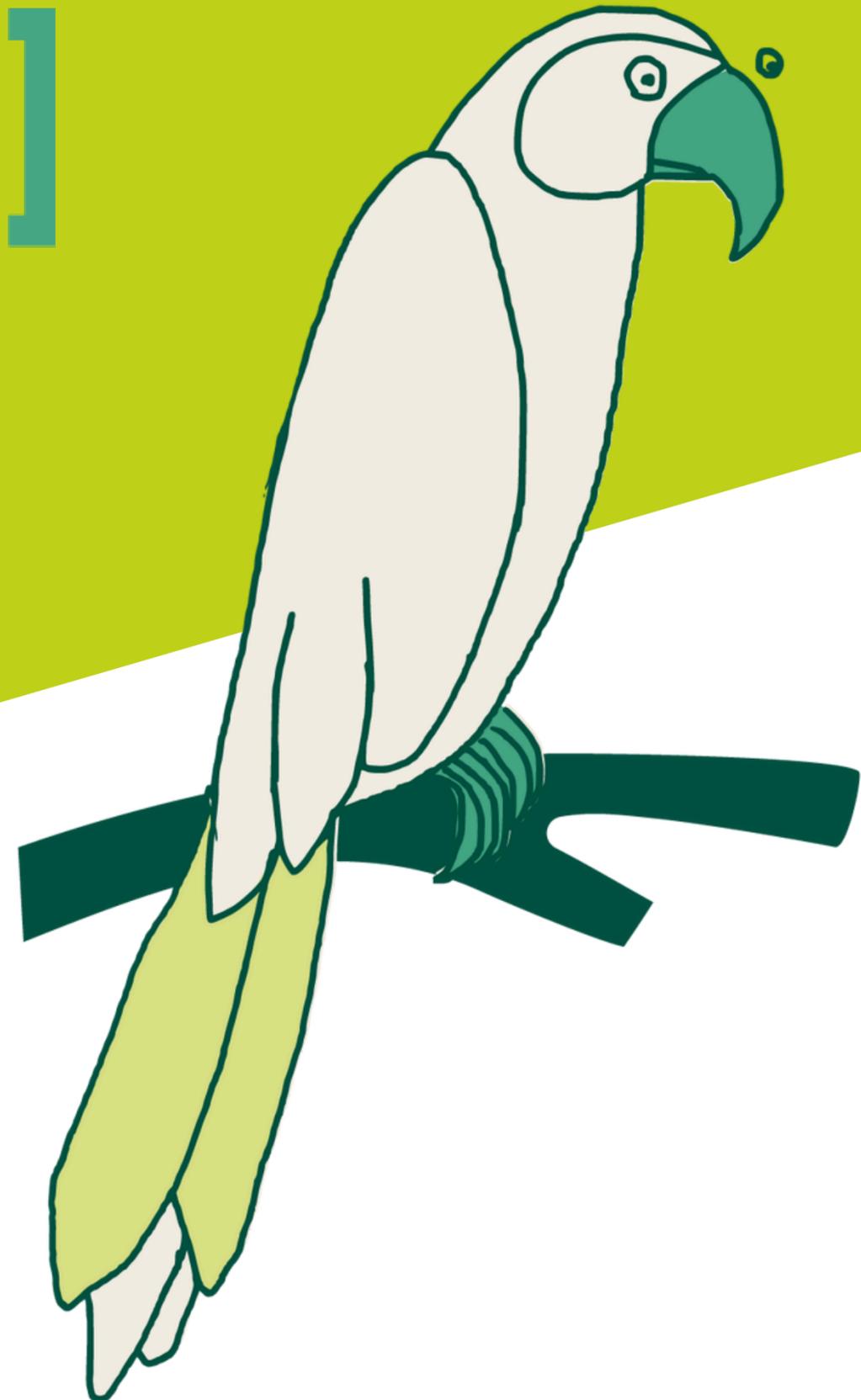
THE RAT OR ASSUMPTION TRAP

IF YOU MEAN THIS...	What it means	...EXPLAIN WITH THIS
Agroecology / agroecological transition	An environmentally friendly and socially just approach to food and farming, using principles of ecology, promoting crop diversity, low resource use etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is agroecology?• Definition	<i>Natural farming that avoids toxic chemicals and nurtures land, nature and people</i> <i>Farming with nature rather than against it to grow healthy nutritious food</i> <i>Farming that takes care of the land and nature to grow food that's good for people and the planet.</i>

[PARROT TRAP]

Stick to your
own key message

Avoid the parrot trap
Don't repeat
the opposition.





THE PARROT OR REPETITION TRAP

DON'T SAY



Why it's
unhelpful



DO SAY

“Growing more food is not the solution to rising hunger”

Implies growing food is the solution to world hunger. By associating growing food with the term world hunger.

“To address world hunger we need to better manage the food we produce”

“These policies are not set in stone”

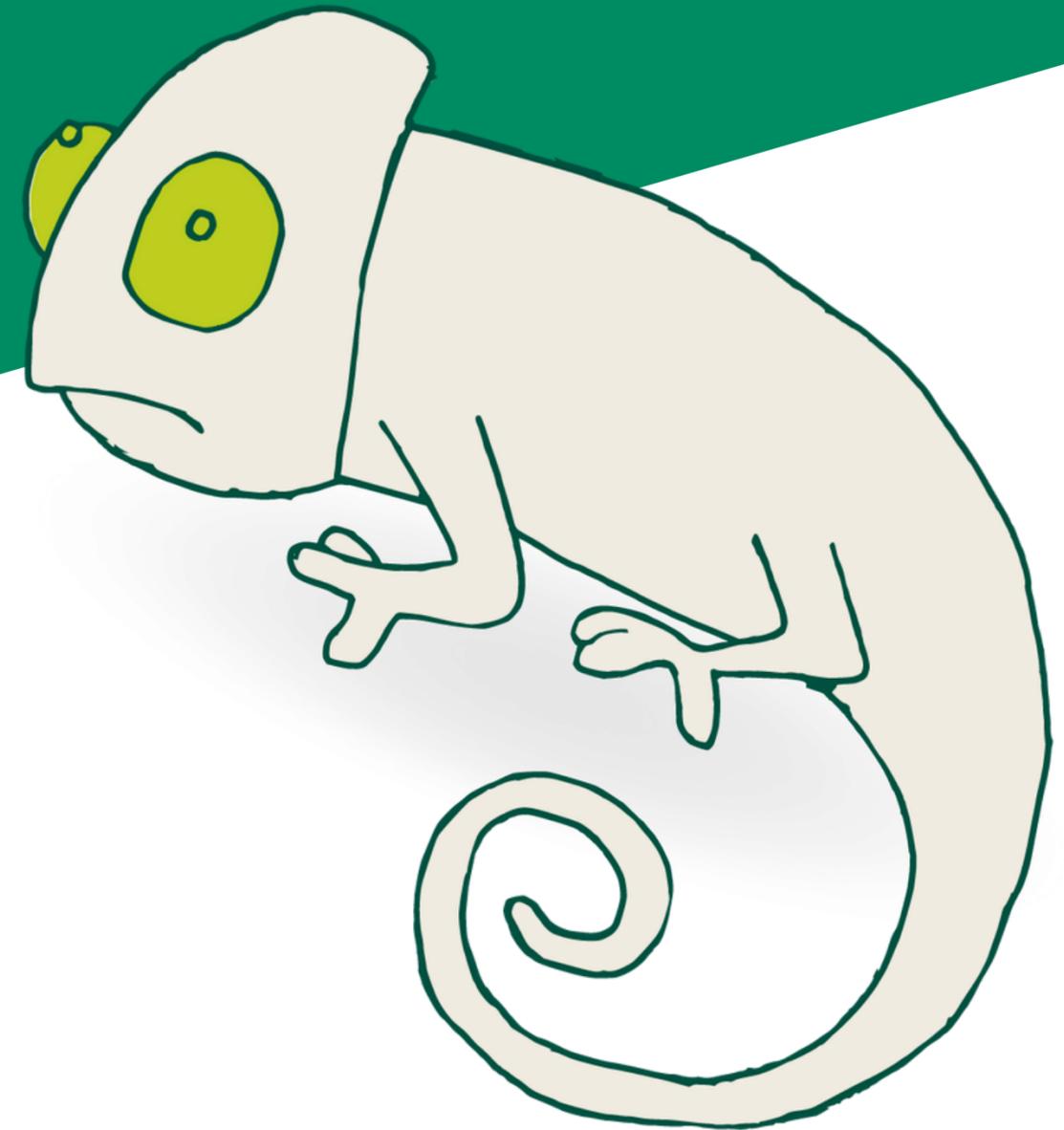
Accidentally reinforce the idea that they are hard to change when we are trying to do the opposite.

“These policies can be changed”

[CHAMALEON TRAP]

Make the problem clear

Avoid the chamaleon trap
Don't hide the damage or use euphemisms.





THE CHAMELEON OR SANITISING TRAP

DON'T
SAY



Why it's a
problem



DO
SAY

Plant protection products
Crop protection products
Insecticides/herbicides

Makes them sound targeted
when they often aren't
Makes them sound protective
and harmless

*Harmful chemicals,
toxic chemicals,
poisonous
chemicals*

Biodiversity decline

Makes it sound passive and
biodiversity is less evocative
than nature

*Destruction
of nature*

Reform

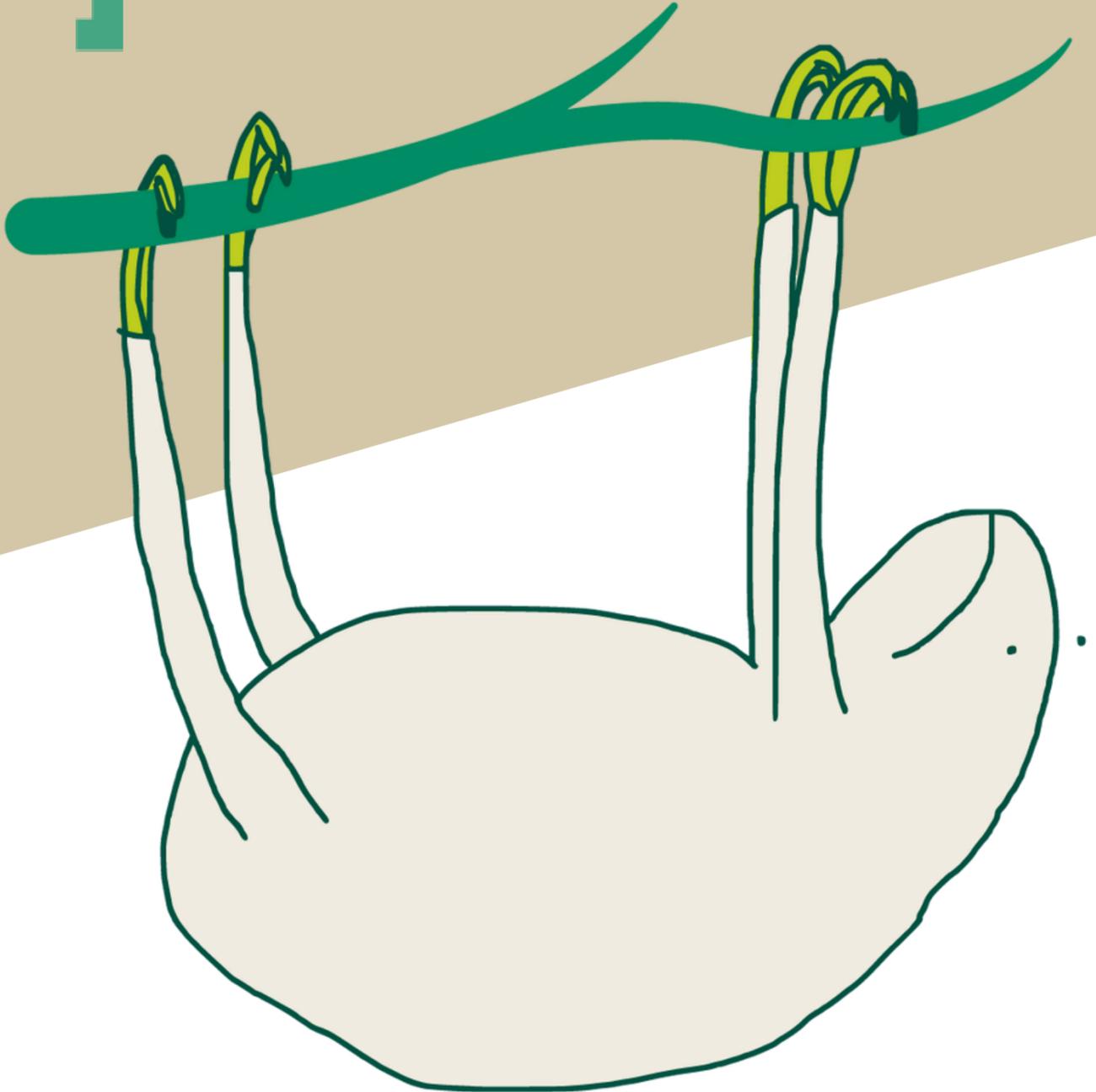
If the reform is one you don't
like it makes it sound minimal
and unthreatening.

*Damaging changes,
ripping up laws*

[SLOTH TRAP]

Get active –
show who is doing
what to whom?

Avoid the sloth trap
Stop making bad
things seem inevitable





THE SLOTH OR PASSIVE TRAP

DON'T
SAY



Why it's a
problem



DO
SAY

With the world climate changing at an alarming pace and the unprecedented loss of biodiversity we face, the world's food supply and ultimately the survival of our species are at stake.

Makes it seem like climate change is natural and inevitable.
Biodiversity loss is passive.

With fossil fuel companies driving climate change at an alarming pace and the unprecedented destruction of wildlife through industrial food production we face, the world's food supply and ultimately the survival of our species are at stake.

[COBRA TRAP]

Make change
seem possible

Avoid the cobra trap
Make the problem clear
but don't scare people





THE COBRA OR THREAT TRAP

DON'T
SAY



Why it's a
problem



DO
SAY

We have never
faced a crisis like
this ever before

Makes the problem
seem unsolvable.
Making it something new
makes it look harder to
solve than something we
have seen before.

*The research is clear on
how to make farming
climate friendly and there
are many examples of
how it is already being
put into practice.*

This is all
happening at an
unimaginable
scale.

Again, makes the problem
look big and frightening

*The path of action is clear
Solutions exist and
there is overwhelming
support for action*

Metaphor





WHAT IS A METAPHOR?

In the broadest sense, metaphor is about using one thing to describe another. Metaphors work because they compare a complicated concept to something more familiar. They are shortcuts to understanding.

What is metaphor useful for?

Explaining how things work. When you give someone information in the form of a metaphor, you preprocess it for them. Metaphors create vivid mental images and emotions, aiding understanding and retention, engaging audiences deeper.

Your audience may not understand how your issue works but they might have an idea about how something else works: you can make use of this.

EXERCISE

Metaphor



Useful if you want to convince change is possible

THE VEHICLE

Talk about the system as a vehicle in motion, an object created by humans to perform a certain function, to get people to where they want to go. The vehicle requires maintenance and responsible drivers. The driver of a vehicle can change, and the vehicle can change direction.

E.g. "We need to take a new direction for food policy across the world, it is time to throw big agriculture out of the driving seat and...."

Changing the narrative on food and farming

Do Say - “corporate food production”

When criticising damaging aspects of agriculture, we need to use terms like **corporate food production** or **big agribusiness**. Reserve the term “farming” for positive sustainable agriculture.

Make change seem possible

Highlight positive changes that have happened previously (including in other countries and other struggles) and make it clear what needs to happen now. Show that we are part of a **big movement of people** working for a common goal.

Highlight the damage being done

Your food is **covered in pesticides**, not “residue”. Habitat is not being “fragmented”; it is being **destroyed by corporate food production**.

Keep it simple and relatable

We need to use clear and simple language, **cut the jargon**, and use words your audience understands in the same way you do.

Get active – always say who is doing what to whom

Policies don't just appear; they are the result of **lobbying by food barons**. Biodiversity is not “lost”; it is being **destroyed**.

THANK
YOU
😊

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