

Farm to Fork: ready to focus on the implementation phase

Brussels, 20 October 2021

Today, the European Parliament adopted its Report on the Farm to Fork Strategy, published by the European Commission in May 2020. While the text adopted by the Parliament is the result of a compromise agreement among diverging political stances, it undoubtedly endorses the Commission's ambitious plan to make food systems more sustainable, while pointing on some weaknesses of the Strategy.

Comment from FoodDrinkEurope's Director General, Mella Frewen:

FoodDrinkEurope stands firmly behind the Parliament in its ambition to make the Farm to Fork Strategy an important step towards sustainable, resilient and fair food systems. We have long called for a common EU food policy that balances environmental, social and economic sustainability – today's report confirms the Parliament's support in this direction.

We share MEPs' view that the cumulative effects of the various measures of the Farm to Fork Strategy should be assessed to ensure that cost-effectiveness, unintended consequences and trade-offs are taken into account. EU food and drink manufacturers purchase 70% of EU farm produce, it is therefore critical to maintain the competitiveness, productivity and resilience of the entire EU agri-food sector, while keeping food affordable for consumers and ensuring an effective transition towards more sustainable food systems.

We are pleased to see MEPs' desire to preserve a well-functioning Single Market and to support European food and drink SMEs – which represent 99% of the sector in the EU – to align with the Farm to Fork objectives. However, we also note that the Parliament's report calls for regulatory requirements which may pose extra burdens and costs on Europe's food SMEs, by setting maximum limits on some nutrient levels for example.

It was good to see MEPs reiterate the need for science-based measures to promote healthy, sustainable and more balanced diets, taking into account the cultural and regional diversity of European foods and diets, as well as consumer needs. We believe that a holistic, non-discriminatory approach should be followed when looking to improve diets.

We therefore regret that some parts of the Parliament's Report single out ultra- or highly processed foods for their impact on our health and the environment. We must point out that the level of processing is not, in itself, a marker of health or sustainability. As part of the strong commitment of our industry to help address challenges such as obesity and associated health problems, we would welcome the chance to discuss this complex topic – in all of its facets and its implications for food sustainability – with policymakers.

FoodDrinkEurope and its members remain committed to playing a leading role in the food sustainability transition, including through active support of the EU Code of Conduct for Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices. Now that positions on the overall Strategy are clear and we move fully into the implementation phase, we look forward to

collaborating with MEPs, other policymakers and stakeholders to make Europe's food systems truly sustainable.

Note to the editors

FoodDrinkEurope is the organisation of Europe's food and drink industry, the largest manufacturing sector, a leading employer in the EU and a key contributor to the economy (291,000 companies, 99% SMEs, 4.8 million employees).

Contact Person

Will Surman, Director of Communications & Public Affairs
w.surman@fooddrinkeurope.eu