

Europe's food and drink sector: a catalyst for industrial growth, sustainability and security

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Amid recent European Parliament elections and key discussions in the European Council on the future political direction of the EU, FoodDrinkEurope has unveiled a guide for incoming policymakers, detailing strategies to unleash a competitive European food and drink industry, which is equipped to lead the world on sustainability, innovation and economic performance, while delivering food safety, affordability and security.

The updated [Food Investment and Resilience Plan](#) will be launched at FoodDrinkEurope's #FoodFuture Ideas Fest and Summer Party in Brussels today, attracting over 800 stakeholders to discuss the future of food.

Dirk Jacobs, Director General of FoodDrinkEurope, stated: "The food and drink sector is vital to the EU's ambitions, driving growth, sustainability, and food security. With the right support, we have the ability to significantly enhance Europe's competitiveness, provide societal stability, and invest in resilient food systems. Close engagement with our sector will therefore be critical for policymakers in the coming term."

Mr Jacobs emphasises the industry's scale and impact: "Our sector consists of nearly 300,000 businesses, with nine out of ten employing fewer than 20 people. Yet they contribute €110 billion in wages annually, purchase 70% of all EU farm produce, and invest over €2 billion in innovative, sustainably-produced products."

He urged policymakers to frame their policy approach around FoodDrinkEurope's call for an EU Food Investment and Resilience Plan, which includes:

- **An EU Food Investment Strategy** to address funding gaps, drive public and private financing, and stimulate investments in areas such as sustainable agricultural practices, renewable energy, packaging recycling, and digital infrastructure.
- **Accelerated risk assessment and approvals**, with increased capacity within EFSA to support sustainable food solutions and give companies confidence to innovate in the EU.
- **Regulatory and reporting simplification as well as a competitiveness check** for proposed new laws to maintain Single Market principles, deliver fairness along the supply chain, and ensure a positive impact on growth, social and environmental goals.
- **An Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Agri-Food**, to acknowledge the strategic importance of food and the need for strong leadership to deliver sustainable food systems.
- **Policy co-creation** to ensure business expertise is used to develop sound and future-proof policy through a continuous, de-polarised agri-food dialogue.

Marco Settembri, President of FoodDrinkEurope, emphasised The Food Plan’s alignment with the EU’s Strategic Agenda. He said: “Our sector employs 4.6 million people. Our turnover is equivalent to the combined GDP of Ireland and Belgium. We are central to the EU’s sustainable growth strategy.”

Mr Settembri highlighted the sector’s role in ensuring Europe’s security, “A robust food and drink industry is critical not only for economic stability but also for security. Ensuring access to high-quality, affordable food and drink is essential for a stable and peaceful Europe. Our industry and supply chain at large must be resilient to global shocks and capable of feeding everyone sustainably.”

He reaffirmed the industry’s commitment to sustainability: “FoodDrinkEurope is dedicated to achieving net zero emissions, ending deforestation, ensuring sustainable packaging, and supporting farmers in their transition to more sustainable agriculture.”

FoodDrinkEurope also published its updated [Action Project for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems](#), showcasing its commitment to ambitious sustainability goals. The Action Project includes activities by FoodDrinkEurope, such as guidelines, toolkits, webinars and partnerships, aimed at helping food and drink companies, particularly SMEs, engage practically in the transition towards sustainable food systems.

Note to the editors

FoodDrinkEurope is the organisation of Europe’s food and drink industry, the largest manufacturing sector in Europe, a leading employer and a key contributor to the economy (291,000 companies, 99% SMEs, 4.6 million employees).

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