



EUROPEAN COMMISSION
HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Food and feed safety, innovation
E1 – Food information and composition, food waste

SUMMARY REPORT OF THE STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION ON THE FARM TO FORK STRATEGY HELD IN BRUSSELS ON 18 FEBRUARY 2020

Chair: Sabine Jülicher, *Director of Food and feed safety, innovation, Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety, DG SANTE*

1. Introduction

As part of the European Green Deal, the European Commission will adopt, in Spring 2020, a ‘Farm to Fork’ strategy to design a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system. The aim of this meeting was to exchange views with stakeholders on the objectives of the Farm to Fork Strategy, as well as on the challenges, the intervention areas and the possible regulatory or non-regulatory initiatives that need to be considered in the context of the strategy.

In her opening remarks, the Chair reminded participants that the transition towards sustainable food systems was an essential part of the European Green Deal, one of the main political priorities of the European Commission. She said that this event was crucial to exchange views with stakeholders in order to achieve the right balance in the Farm to Fork strategy and gave floor to the first.

2. Presentation of the Farm to Fork strategy – Roadmap by Alexandra Nikolakopoulou, DG SANTE, Head of Unit, SANTE E1

The Commission presented the Farm to Fork strategy Roadmap, published on the Commission’s Better Regulation website (<https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/12183-Farm-to-Fork-Strategy>) and insisted on the necessity to engage with stakeholders all along the process

The main points of discussion are summarized below.

2.1. The Farm to Fork strategy timeline and development

Questions of participants focussed on :

- the short timeframe between the end of the stakeholder consultation (16th of March) and the indicative date of adoption of the Communication and Action plan (25th of March) (**EEB**);
- the possibility for stakeholders to be consulted on specific elements of the action plan (**EEB**);
- the opportunity of creating a horizontal structure for stakeholder dialogue in order to identify key challenges and trade-offs (**FoodDrinkEurope**);
- the type of impact assessments (for individual actions vs. overall strategy) that would be carried out following the adoption of the Farm to Fork strategy (**FoodDrinkEurope**);

- the need to clearly state within the communication the fact that this is only a starting point and that the Farm to Fork strategy will be improved/revised in the future (**WWF**).

The Chair reassured stakeholders that in view of the limited timeline, their feedback would be considered and integrated on a rolling basis. She then explained that stakeholders would have many occasions to express their views on the Farm to Fork strategy, including on dedicated topics. While no detailed consultation would take place on the action plan as such, specific consultations would take place on the individual initiatives proposed in the action plan and impact assessments carried out, in line with better regulation policy. The Chair concluded that the adoption of the Communication and Action plan was only the beginning of a long process to implement the new strategy.

2.2. The Farm to Fork structure and its interactions with the other components of the European Green Deal

Stakeholders questioned the strategy's structure and its interactions with other components of the European Green Deal, stating in particular the need to :

- ensure that Farm to Fork is a coherent and comprehensive strategy for all Green Deal actions related to food systems (**EDA**);
- set up baselines, targets and indicators based on reliable data and the involvement of relevant stakeholders to gather such data (**FVE**); **IFOAM** suggested to set targets for organic land and organic products in public procurement rules;
- ensure coherence between the Farm to Fork and the Biodiversity strategies, as well as other relevant measures of the Green Deal related to food e.g. Circular Economy Action Plan, EU Industrial Strategy etc. (**Europarc Federation, FoodDrinkEurope, Birdlife, TestBiotech**). The need to address data gaps and promote the use of alternative animal feed solutions e.g. household organic waste to feed insects (**Ellen McArthur Foundation**)

Stakeholders also:

- Welcomed the collaboration between the different DGs, and called for a stronger involvement of the Directorate General for Environment (ENV) and the Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (GROW) in the elaboration of the Farm to Fork strategy (**ECPA, FoodDrinkEurope**).

The Chair highlighted that the Green Deal objectives would guide all the different working strands of the Green Deal, and that Directorate Generals closely collaborate on common topics. The Farm to Fork strategy will adopt the most comprehensive view possible in that respect, ensuring its interlinkage and coherence with other Green Deal-related policies.

The Commission explained that alternative feed sources are being considered, while preserving food and feed safety.

2.3. The implementation of the Farm to Fork strategy

As regards the implementation of the Farm to Fork strategy, stakeholders raised the following concerns:

- the need to define sustainability in order to ensure consistent implementation of the F2F strategy (**BEUC**);
the importance of a policy mix, including both soft measures and hard measures, notably fiscal measures and public procurement rules reform (**Greenpeace**).

The Commission replied that the definition of food systems given by the Food and Agriculture Organisation served as a basis for reflection, but that the crucial aspect of the Farm to Fork strategy lies in the objectives rather than in the definition itself. The Commission added that there was a need to include a real mix of policies with both regulatory and non-regulatory measures and a creative thinking approach, and acknowledged that fiscal measures and public procurement rules were also part of the reflection.

2.4. The interactions between Farm to Fork and the Common agricultural policy (CAP)

As regards the interactions between Farm to Fork and the CAP, stakeholders raised questions on :

- the role of the CAP in supporting farmers' transition towards sustainable food systems while preserving their economic viability (**IFOAM**) ;
- the role of the CAP national strategic plans in ensuring the implementation of the Farm to Fork strategy and the related timeline (**Europabio, IFOAM, Greenpeace**);
- the methodology adopted by the Commission to assess CAP national strategic plans in order to ensure a level playing field across Member states (**Client Earth**);
- the inclusion of reduction targets for agricultural GHG emissions under CAP national plans (**WWF**)
- the request to include pesticide targets in CAP national plans (**PAN Europe**)
- the possibility of starting a new CAP proposal taking into account the Farm to Fork strategy and the sustainability aspects (**Europarc Federation, IPES**)

UECBV inquired about the use of the Copernicus system by farmers to assess the carbon storage potential and variation along the time.

Following these comments, the Commission reaffirmed the role that the reformed CAP and national strategic plans will play in implementing the Farm to Fork strategy, as well as the Green Deal objectives in general. The Commission explained that a formal amendment of the CAP proposal is not envisaged, but further work will be carried out with the European Parliament and the Council to ensure that the new CAP supports the Green Deal with relevant tools. The focus should be shifted to Member states instead, to ensure that national ambitions are in line with Green Deal objectives. The Commission highlighted the importance of proposed links between CAP plans and environmental policies; the collaboration across Directorate Generals to reinforce these links – e.g. collaboration with DG CLIMA to align with national climate plans – and to provide the relevant support to Member States in preparation of CAP national plans.

In view of absence of an agreement on the next multiannual financial framework and reform of the CAP, the Commission has proposed a transitional regulation, which is currently under discussion. This regulation would delay the implementation of CAP reform by 1 year. This means CAP Strategic Plans would be applicable as of 1st January 2022.

The Commission is working on using Copernicus data to monitor environmental and land use changes as well as implementation of the CAP.

3. Key challenges, trade-offs and the way forward by Directorate-General for Health and Food safety, Directorate-General for Agriculture and Directorate-General for Maritime affairs and Fisheries (Sabine Pelsser, DG SANTE, Gijs Schilthuis, DG AGRI and Lorella de la Cruz Iglesias, DG MARE)

In a joint presentation (DG SANTE, DG AGRI and DG MARE), the Commission highlighted the key challenges faced by European food systems as well as the trade-offs and issues to be considered in the implementation of the Farm to Fork strategy. Stakeholders were encouraged to take the floor – an overview of the discussion can be found below.

3.1. Production

On production-related aspects of the Farm to Fork strategy, the stakeholders questioned and commented the following points:

- the need to carry out a social and economic impact assessment of the Farm to Fork strategy on primary production (**COPA-COGECA**);
- the necessity to address the preservation of animal welfare (including fish welfare), overfishing and intensive animal farming in the Farm to Fork strategy (**Compassion world farming, Greenpeace**) and use the Animal Welfare Platform for further consultation (**EFAB, FVE**);
- the need to specify the type of production inputs to be reduced (**Ellen McArthur Foundation**); The need to take into account the role of protected areas (**EUROPARC Federation**)
- the need to establish science-based targets for plant protection products and set clear impacts to be achieved through their reduction (**ECPA**)
- the need to remove existing legislative bottlenecks e.g. use of animal by-products as feed (**CLITRAVI, UECBV**).

On these issues, the Commission replied it was willing to find a right balance between the three aspects of sustainability – environment, social and economic so that no aspect is left behind. As such, the issues related to farming methods, animal welfare, overfishing and aquaculture are, amongst others, part of the ongoing reflection. The Chair highlighted the importance of adopting a science-based approach and gathering solid data for setting baselines; the Communication can only set indicative targets. For the pesticide reduction targets, the Chair indicated the need for further work on integrated pest management. Fish welfare will be considered in the context of the Sustainable Aquaculture Strategy.

The Commission further reaffirmed its commitment to remove any legislative bottlenecks based on scientific-evidence, while always preserving food and feed safety.

3.2. Processing, retail

Stakeholders inquired about the international trade implications of the Farm to Fork strategy, mainly about the need to adopt a coherent approach concerning imported products that have been produced at different standards (**Coceral, IPES, Ellen McArthur Foundation**).

The issue of the Farm to Fork timeline was also raised in this context, as this is required in discussions with third countries which provide raw materials for EU food production. The Chair replied that the

timeline would be further considered taking into account the current College mandate and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

3.3. Consumption

On consumption-related aspects, the following points were stressed by the stakeholders:

- the importance for the Farm to Fork strategy to address the issues related to consumption and especially food safety, healthy diets as well as overconsumption and the need to re-balance diets (**Compassion world farming, ENSA, Greenpeace**);
- the shift towards new protein sources, such as plant-based and insect-based products (**ENSA, IPIFF**) avoiding the promotion of ultra-processed foodstuffs based on alternative proteins (**CLITRAVI**) ;
- the positive impact that a favourable change in the food environment would have on consumers and the need to communicate these co-benefits better (**EPHA**);
- the necessity for consumers to accept the true cost-accounting of food products (**IPES**);
- the need to go beyond consumer information initiatives towards making healthy, sustainable food choices (**BEUC**);
- whether the Farm to Fork strategy would include actions on food reformulation (**EFFA**).

On these points, the Commission reaffirmed its strong commitment to create a new food environment for consumers to make the sustainable choice the affordable and easy choice, as the actions foreseen in the strategy go beyond empowering consumers with information. Therefore, reflections include, *inter alia*, the development of new varieties of balanced diets, such as plant-based and insect-based diets.

4. Exchange of views on the Farm to Fork strategy with the stakeholders

Later on, the Commission and the stakeholders exchanged views on the Farm to Fork strategy, especially on what should be its main priorities.

4.1. Governance

In the course of the discussion, the question of the appropriate level of governance was raised by stakeholders. In that respect, it was reminded how important were the national, regional and local levels in delivering the Farm to Fork strategy (**Eurocities**).

The Commission acknowledged the crucial role of these three levels of governance in delivering the Farm to Fork strategy, and insisted on the role of cities to promote innovative change towards a sustainable food system.

4.2. Innovation

Most stakeholders called for a further push in terms of innovation (e.g. to facilitate the market authorisation of new substances and to take into account the efforts of the DG AGRI – European Innovation Partnership handbooks) and stressed the importance of adopting a science-based approach, especially as regards target and indicator setting (**ECPA, Europabio, UECBV**).

TestBiotech raised concerns that the outcomes of the COM study on new genomic techniques could be pre-empted due to its title. The Chair reassured participants that this is not the case, and pointed to the timeline of the study (April 2021), which is independent from the Farm to Fork Strategy.

The Commission reaffirmed its strong commitment to promote the role of science and innovation in the Farm to Fork strategy.

4.3. SMEs

Stakeholders also reaffirmed the role of SMEs in the food supply chain which will have a major role to play in this transition (**IBMA, SME United**) as well as actions needed to support their transition in the context of the Farm to Fork strategy – e.g financial incentives. **IBMA** called for proportionate regulation for biocontrol technologies, taking into account SMEs capacities.

The Commissions stated that both DG SANTE and DG GROW were working closely to integrate specific provisions for SMEs in the Farm to Fork strategy, especially in terms of training and funding.

5. Wrap-up and next steps

The Chair concluded the session by reminding how complex the issues raised by the Farm to Fork strategy were, as all players are required to rethink their priorities. She highlighted the importance of local, regional and national governance in the context of the Farm to Fork strategy, as well as the key role played by private actors in its implementation. She thanked everyone for their invaluable input and comments, and invited stakeholders to send their written comments during the consultation process on the strategy's roadmap. The Chair also recalled the next steps in the process, mentioning the 13 March meeting of the advisory group of the food chain.

Annex: List of participants

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS
AVEC
ANIMAL HEALTH EUROPE
BEUC
CELCAA
CLITRAVI
COCERAL
COPA-COGECA
EUROCOMMERCE
ECSLA
ECPA
EDA
EFFA
EFPRA
EUROPECHE
EIT FOOD
ENSA
EUROSEEDS
EU SPECIALTY FOOD INGREDIENTS
EUROPA BIO
EUROPARC FEDERATION
FEFANA
FOODDRINK EUROPE
FOODSERVICES EUROPE

FRESHFEL
FRUCOM
FVE
IBMA GLOBAL
INDEPENDENT RETAIL EUROPE
IFOAM
IPIFF
SME UNITED
SNE
UECBV
VIA CAMPESINA

NON GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS
BIRDLIFE
CLIENTEARTH
COMPASSION IN WORLD FARMING
EEB
EHN
ELLEN MCARTHUR FOUNDATION
EPHA
EFNCP
EUFIC
EU FOOD POLICY COALITION
EURO COOP
GREENPEACE

PAN EUROPE
SLOW FOOD
TEST BIOTECH
WWF
ZWE

POLICY STAKEHOLDERS AND AGENCIES
EUROPEAN FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITY (EFSA)
EEA
EMSA

SCIENTIFIC ORGANISATIONS
IPES

SCIENTIFIC ADVICE MECHANISM
GROUP OF CHIEF SCIENTIFIC ADVISORS (GCSA)
SAPEA
SAM UNIT

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
DG CLIMA
DG EMPL
DGB JRC-ISPRA
DG RTD
DG SANTE