

Frans Timmermans, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal
Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
Janusz Wojciechowski, Commissioner for Agriculture
European Commission
Berlaymont, Rue de la Loi 200
1000 Brussels

24 June 2021

Dear Executive Vice-President Timmermans
Dear Commissioners Kyriakides and Wojciechowski

Review of EU policy on promotion of food products

The EU promotion policy on agricultural products needs to contribute to healthy, sustainable, primarily plant-based diets, while also meeting climate and environmental objectives. It should exclude agri-food products that are not coherent with these essential goals.

The European Commission has initiated a timely review of EU policy on the promotion of food products and has opened a public consultation process.

With this letter, we are pleased to contribute to this consultation and to the broader need for better coherence in related aspects of EU policy: Alignment is needed between all policies that are inter-linked with farming and food, including public health, environmental protection, animal welfare, public procurement, trade, and investment in and subsidies for farming and food production.

We focus here on the environmental and human health aspects of diets heavy in animal products. Recent EU policies recognise the need for a shift to more plant-rich European diets, yet perversely, campaign subsidies under the EU promotion policy have been used to promote consumption of those very animal products.

The EU *Farm to Fork* strategy notes that: Moving to a more plant-based diet with less red and processed meat and with more fruits and vegetables will reduce not only risks of life threatening diseases, but also the environmental impact of the food system .ⁱ

The *Beating Cancer Plan* notes that the Promotions Policy review is being undertaken 'with a view to enhancing its contribution to sustainable production and consumption, and in line with the shift to a more plant-based diet, with less red and processed meat and other foods linked to cancer risks and more fruit and vegetables.'ⁱⁱ

A tsunami of over-production and over-consumption of animal products in the EU has overwhelmed nature. 68% of EU agricultural land is used for animal production and feed. Land-use change related to these activities is the most widespread driver of biodiversity loss. Intensification of crop production for concentrate feed demanded by

industrial animal production leads to soil degradation, overuse and pollution of water, and air pollution. Around 90% of the soy imported by the EU is used for animal feed,ⁱⁱⁱ much of which comes from deforested land. Agriculture stands for 10.3% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions, of which close to 70% come from animal agriculture. The Farm to Fork Strategy notes that 'If European diets were in line with dietary recommendations, the environmental footprint of food systems would be significantly reduced.'ⁱ

The high levels of consumption of red and processed meat made possible by industrial production contribute to heart disease, obesity, diabetes and certain cancers.^{iv} The World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer has classified red meat as probably carcinogenic to humans, and processed meat as carcinogenic.^v The Farm to Fork Strategy notes that: 'It is estimated that in the EU in 2017 over 950,000 deaths (one out of five) and over 16 million lost healthy life years were attributable to unhealthy diets, mainly cardiovascular diseases and cancers.'ⁱ

Yet in recent years, nearly one third of the 200 million euros of the promotion budget has been dedicated annually to advertising animal products, in some cases funding up to 80% of marketing campaign costs. Some of these have explicitly aimed at reversing decline or maintaining growth in meat consumption. This policy needs reform so that it supports public health, environmental protection and animal welfare instead of putting them at risk.

We call on the European Commission to reform the EU promotion policy for agricultural products, so that it provides support and incentives for the crucial shift to more plant-based diets in Europe, for the benefit of animals, people and the planet.

Yours sincerely

Marc Abraham MRCVS | Veterinarian, author, broadcaster and animal welfare advocate

Dr Molly Anderson | Member, IPES-Food, William R. Kenan Jr. Chair in Food Studies at Middlebury College, Vermont

Prof Laurent Begue-Shanklanduga | Professeur à l'université Grenoble Alpes et membre de l'Institut Universitaire de France

Prof Emeritus Mark Bekoff | Professor Emeritus of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, University of Colorado

Jérôme Bernard-Pellet | Docteur en médecine, nutritionniste

Prof Dr Jan J. Boersema | Professor of Fundamentals of Environmental Sciences, Leiden University

Michel Bourban | Postdoctoral Researcher, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick

Dr Katarína Bučková | Postdoctoral Research Assistant, Queen's University Belfast

Florence Burgat | Philosophe, directeur de recherche (INRAE/ENS)

Prof Emeritus Joyce Carter CBE DL Cgeol FGS | Vice-Chancellor, University of Winchester

Dr Roland Cash | Médecin, docteur en pharmacologie, économiste de santé

Georgios Charitakis MD, Ph.D. | Cardiologist, homoeopathic doctor, licensed coach for HeartMath

Georges Chapouthier | Neurobiologist and philosopher, CNRS

Franck Courchamp | Biodiversity Dynamics & Macroecology, Lab of Ecologie, Systematique & Evolution

Prof Sheila Crispin MA Vet MB BSc PhD DVA DVOPhthal DipECVO FRCVS | Veterinary ophthalmologist, academic, author and writer

Prof Dr Giuseppe Delmestri | Vienna University of Economics and Business

Catherine Devillers | Docteur en médecine, nutritionniste (Centre Belge d'Information Pharmacothérapeutique)

Dr James G Dyke | Sustainability science, food security, Global Systems Institute, Exeter

Dr Adam Eckhardt | Biochemistry, Institute of Physiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Dr Gilles Escarguel | Deputy-director, LEHNA Laboratoire d'Ecologie des Hydrosystèmes Naturels et Anthropisés CNRS

Romain Espinosa | Researcher in economics, Centre national de la recherche scientifique

Hope Ferdowsian MD, MPH | Physician, author and advocate with expertise in human rights, animal rights, ethics and public health

Dr Becca Franks | Research Scientist animal behaviour, Dept Environmental Studies, NYU

Jane Goodall PhD DBE | Founder - the Jane Goodall Institute & UN Messenger of Peace

Prof Dave Goulson | Professor of Biology, University of Sussex, specialist in ecology & conservation of insects

Prof Joanna Hańderek | Institute of Philosophy, Jagiellonian University

Prof Emeritus Stevan Harnad | Professor of Cognitive Science, University of Québec and McGill University

Prof Emeritus Serge Herberg | Professeur Emérite de Nutrition, Université Sorbonne Paris-Nord

Dr Jan Hladký | Mathematics, Institute of Mathematics of the Czech Academy of Sciences and Institute of Computer Science of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Michelle Holdsworth PhD RD, RNutr (Public Health), HDR | Professor of Public Health Nutrition, University of Sheffield

Prof Tim Jackson | Sustainable Development, University of Surrey and Director, SLRG

Marie-Claude Kergoat | Généticienne au Musée de l'Homme (CEA-MNHN)

Prof Andrew Knight FRCVS | Animal Welfare and Ethics, Founding Director of the University of Winchester Centre for Animal Welfare

Dr Anna Kozajda | Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine

Prof Paulina Kramarz | Associate Professor at the Institute of Environmental Sciences of the Faculty of Biology, Jagiellonian University

Dr Perla Kuchtová | Sustainable farming, University of Life Sciences Prague

Dr Jerzy Kupiec | Dept Ecology and Environmental Protection, University of Life Sciences Poznań

Dr Denis Lairon | Directeur de Recherche, INRAe

Prof Emeritus Robert Lawrence MD | Center for a Livable Future, John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Bill McKibben | Founder of 350.org, Schumann Distinguished Scholar, Middlebury College, Vermont

Prof Ben Mepham | Special Professor in Applied Bioethics, University of Nottingham

Dr Véronique Mondain | Dr Praticien hospitalier, Service d'Infectiologie, Référent Antibiotique CHU de Nice, Membre du groupe Bon Usage des Antibiotiques de la SPILF

Prof Michael Müller-Camen PhD | Vienna University of Economics and Business

Prof Raj Patel | Academic, journalist, activist and writer, University of Texas and Rhodes University

Prof Barry Popkin | W. R. Kenan Jr. Distinguished Professor of Nutrition, University of North Carolina

Jonathon Porritt CBE | Co-Founder, Forum for the Future, writer, broadcaster and commentator on sustainable development

Dr Kate Rawles | Outdoor Philosopher, lecturer on sustainable development, values and ethics

Professor Ewa Rembialkowska | Organic farming science and education, Warsaw University of Life Sciences, ENOAT, International Research Association for FQH and ISOFAR

Lamprini Risos | Docteur en médecine, cardiologue, hôpital académique Erasme, Bruxelles

Dr Andrew Rowan | President of WellBeing International, Founding Editor, *Anthrozoös*

Prof Piotr Rzymski | Dept Environmental Medicine, Poznan University of Medical Sciences

Martin Schlatzer | Research Institute for Organic Agriculture (FiBL Austria)

Dr Kurt Schmidinger | Geophysicist & Food Scientist

Prof Jeff Sebo | Clinical Associate Professor of Environmental Studies, NYU

Jérôme Ségal | Historien et maître de conférences à l'université Paris-Sorbonne

Prof Pete Smith FRS, FRSE, FNA, FEurASc, FI Soil Sci., FRBS | University of Aberdeen,

Dr Lynne U. Sneddon | Scientist specialising in aquatic animal biology and fish welfare, University of Gothenburg

Prof Dr Carola Strassner MBA | Professor of Sustainable Food Systems / Nutrition Ecology, University of Applied Science, Münster

Prof Cédric Sueur | Animal Behaviour and Ethics, University of Strasbourg

Geoff Tansey | Food systems and development expert, curator, Food Systems Academy

Dr Mathilde Touvier | Directrice de Recherche INSERM, Directrice de l'Equipe de Recherche en Epidémiologie Nutritionnelle (EREN)

Nicolas Treich | Economist, associate researcher (INRAE), Member of Toulouse School of Economics (TSE) at the University Toulouse Capitole

Prof Marcin Urbaniak | Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, Pedagogical University, Krakow, Polish Ethical Association

Dr Tereza Vandrovcova | Sociology and animal studies, University of New York in Prague and EACAS

Elodie Vieille Blanchard | Docteure en sciences sociales

Dr Markus Vinnari, Senior Lecturer, Adjunct Professor (Docent) | Helsinki Institute of Sustainability Science, University of Helsinki

Dr Kamil Vlček | Neuroscience, Institute of Physiology of the Czech Academy of Sciences

Prof Emeritus John Webster | University of Bristol, author, founding member of the UK Farm Animal Welfare Council

ⁱ European Commission, 2020. [Farm to Fork Strategy: For a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system.](#)

ⁱⁱ European Commission, 2021. [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan.](#)

ⁱⁱⁱ IDH and IUCN NL, 2019. [European Soy Monitor](#). Researched by B. Kuepper and M. Riemersma of Profundo

^{iv} Willett, W. *et al.*, 2019. [Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT–Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems.](#) *The Lancet* 393:10970. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31788-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31788-4)

^v International Agency for Research on Cancer, 2015. [IARC Monographs evaluate consumption of red meat and processed meat.](#) Press Release N° 240.