

Press release

26 January 2021

Retailers and wholesalers working hard for sustainability, ready to work with all in a code of conduct

EuroCommerce, Euro Coop, and Independent Retail Europe today joined Commission Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans, Commissioner Stella Kyriakides, senior MEPs and other stakeholders at an event to launch work on a code of conduct under the Farm to Fork strategy.

Retailers and wholesalers of all sizes have been in the forefront of increasing the sustainability of the products they offer. They have launched initiatives all over Europe to drive and support sustainable production and consumption by working with their suppliers, supporting farmers in moving to organic and other sustainable production methods, and innovating in offerings to consumers, including via their own brands. Retailers' doors are open to everyone, allowing daily engagement with, and scrutiny by, consumers. The direct interface between suppliers and consumers which our sector provides offers new and rewarding market opportunities for all producers of sustainable products and can help nudge consumers towards buying them. The scale which our sector can offer to producers can also allow a wider public to buy high quality, healthy food at an affordable price.

EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren commented:

"EuroCommerce is pleased to join the Commission and our partners in retail and the rest of the supply chain in this opportunity to work together on a code of conduct which is fit for purpose and that would eventually motivate as many actors as possible to join in. This initiative is an opportunity for our sector to highlight and further develop the many sustainability initiatives our members have engaged in all across Europe and over many years. But we cannot do this alone and the code will need to acknowledge that only by all parts of the supply chain and public authorities working together, can it succeed."

Independent Retail Europe Director-General Else Groen said:

"We are eager to work with everyone to make this code a success, but to achieve its objectives, those objectives need to go with the grain of the actions and aspirations of those expected to deliver them. They should be grounded in the many initiatives our sector already undertakes and involve voluntary commitments to reach a common goal. This is also important if it is to enable the many SMEs, hard hit by the COVID-19 crisis, to participate at their own pace. Therefore, and in view of the very challenging timeline, to succeed, the objectives need to be both ambitious and achievable."

Euro Coop Secretary-General Todor Ivanov added:

"Retailers have a close relationship with their communities. We work closely with local suppliers to offer them a ready outlet for quality healthy food sustainably produced, and access to consumers ready to buy them. We pay a premium for that quality, but sustainable food should not be a privilege for the few. By creating volume can also help put those sustainable products more easily in reach of all consumers, who are the owners of consumer co-ops. It should be a clear objective for the code of conduct that it serves everyone involved, from the producer to the consumer - and not least our planet. As value-driven businesses, consumer co-ops are ready to work with the EU policymakers to make this code a reality."

-ENDS-

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[EuroCommerce](#) is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 31 countries and 5.4 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale provide a link between producers and 500 million European consumers over a billion times a day. It generates 1 in 7 jobs, providing a varied career for 29 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.

Established in 1963, [Independent Retail Europe](#) is the European association that acts as an umbrella organisation for groups of independent retailers in the food and non-food sectors. Our members are groups of independent retailers, associations representing them as well as wider service organizations built to support independent retailers. Independent Retail Europe represents 24 groups and associations and their 380,980 independent retailers, who manage more than 757,000 points of sale in urban and rural areas across the whole of the EU, with a combined retail and wholesale turnover of over a trillion euros. This represents a total employment of more than 6,486,000 persons.

[Euro Coop](#) unites 19 national organisations of consumer co-operatives in Europe, representing 30 million consumer-members, 7,000 local co-operatives, 700,000 employees and operating 94,000 points of sale. Consumer co-operatives are enterprises with a distinct model of ownership and governance, which, since 1844, have been operating according to the co-operative principles such as voluntary and open membership (Principle 1) and democratic member control (Principle 2) based on the rule of 1 member-1 vote. Being owned and managed by their members, consumer co-operatives have an inherent responsibility far-reaching past the cash register, such as care for the community (Principle 7) and all its social, economic and environmental facets.

