



Brussels, 9 February 2015

Dear President Jean-Claude Juncker,
Dear First Vice-President Frans Timmermans,
Dear Commissioners Vytenis Andriukaitis, Phil Hogan and Karmenu Vella

We would first like to welcome you to your new roles in the European Commission; we look forward to fruitful dialogues in the next five years.

We are writing to you to encourage the publication of the Communication "Building a Sustainable European Food System".

As reported in the Political Guidelines for the next European Commission, sustainable development is a principle enshrined in the EU Treaties (Article 3 TEU) and is part of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The 3rd SCAR Foresight Exercise (2011) rightly outlines the urgency of tackling food sustainability:

- The increasing scarcity of natural resources and the destabilization of environmental systems represents a real threat, not only to future food supplies, but also to **global stability and prosperity**, as it can aggravate poverty, disturb international trade, finance and investment, and destabilize governments.
- In an era of scarcity, the imperative is to **address production and consumption jointly**.
- The average Western diet with high intakes of meat, fat and sugar is a **risk for individual health, social systems and the environmental life support systems**. Obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and certain types of cancer are widespread, diet-related diseases. The promotion of a healthy diet also reduces the environmental footprint of food consumption in Europe and globally.
- A radical change in food consumption and production in Europe is unavoidable to meet the challenges of scarcities and to **make the European agro-food system more resilient** in times of increasing instability. Now the agro-food sector has an opportunity to positively take on the challenge and be the first to show the world market how to sustainably produce healthy food in a world of scarcities and uncertainty.
- **Coherence between food, energy, environmental and health policies** and across all levels of governance is a prerequisite for a timely transition to sustainable and equitable food systems.

As highlighted in these remarks, the sustainability of the food system clearly plays a key role in the fulfillment of the agenda of the Commission for jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change.

We therefore encourage you to publish the Communication and foster dialogue on the sustainability of the food system.

It is a debate that must reflect the complexity of the food system: it should consider food production, distribution and consumption; it should examine options that enable conscious consumer choices towards sustainable diets, including a reduction in the consumption of animal-based foods, a preference for products

supporting high-quality, pasture-based production and an increase in plant-based foods; it should account for the extraordinary heritage of agro-biodiversity in Europe, a heritage that is simultaneously cultural, environmental and economic; it should recognize the role of agro-ecological approaches and the contribution of small-scale artisanal farmers in protecting this biodiversity, as well as the added value of production systems that respect animal welfare. The sustainable food debate would also enable linking the cost impact of preventable diet-related diseases and governments' ability to deliver good quality health services in the future.

It is a debate that started back in 2012 and involved a wide range of stakeholders. Significant efforts by a diversity of actors and resources were devoted to the consultation launched by the Commission (over 600 responses), as well as in the different spectrums in which the issue was discussed (e.g. High Level Forum for a Better Function Food Supply Chain, High Level Group on Nutrition, Physical Activity and Health, EU Commission advisory groups, Retail Forum for Sustainability, among others). These efforts should not have been in vain.

It is also a debate that will be discussed on the global stage this year at Expo "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life", and where the European Union should take a strong lead.

The European Union aims to offer the world an example of a sustainable vision for the future. We have confidence that the European project will be able to meet this challenge.

Sincerely,

Angelo Caserta, Regional director, BirdLife Europe



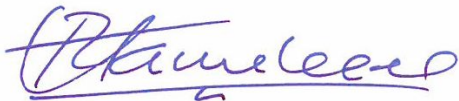
Nina Renshaw, Secretary General, European Public Health Alliance



Todor Ivanov, Secretary General, Euro Coop



Reineke Hameleers, Director General, Eurogroup for Animals



Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director, Friends of the Earth Europe



Paolo Di Croce, Secretary General, Slow Food

