



[Joint press statement] Save the EU School Fruit Scheme 'Better Regulation' must not be put ahead of children's health

25 February 2015, Brussels – The European Commission may be planning to abandon (1) the EU School Fruit Scheme (SFS), a programme that provides fruit and vegetables and promotes healthy eating habits to more than 8.6 million children and more than 50.000 schools across Europe.

Ahead of a Commission meeting with EU member states and stakeholders to discuss the scheme on 2 March, a coalition of twelve public health and fruit and vegetable organisations called (2) (3) on the Commission to prioritise child health when making cuts to EU's initiatives under its so-called 'Better Regulation' plans.

The Commission is considering suspending the scheme as it sees it as an obstacle to achieve its better regulation and CAP simplification goals. Yet, the cost of the scheme is minimal - 0.25% of the EU agricultural budget (from €90-150 million) and it has only been in place for 5 years.

There are 22 million overweight children in the EU of which 5.1 million obese - an EU-wide trend set to make another 1.2 million children overweight and 300,000 obese each year. *“This scheme has already proved to be a remarkable instrument to help children discover taste, texture and diversity of fruit and vegetables while contributing to tackle the growing problem of obesity,”* pointed out Philippe Binard, General Delegate of Freshfel Europe, the European Fresh Produce Association. *“The SFS also supports the agricultural sector, a key industry for the EU's jobs, as it promotes the consumption of its products and connect suppliers to schools in their neighbourhood,”* Mr Binard continued.

OECD and WHO analysis show that consumption of fruit and vegetables is falling since the economic crisis, as households tend to replace healthy food by cheaper processed and calorie-dense foodstuffs.

Educating the youngest is a key starting point to reverse the trends contributing to the obesity epidemic and rising numbers of people suffering preventable chronic diseases including type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers.

“The EU SFS is a very cost-effective investment in public health. It will protect the future health of today's children as they grow up and in the long run pay itself back many times over in savings to Europe's economies and health systems which are already feeling the strain of unhealthy eating and shrinking budgets,” concluded Dorota Sienkiewicz, Health Equity and Policy Coherence Coordinator at the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA).

- **Note to editors**

(1) The European Commission is recommending to co-legislators to put on hold any further proceedings with respect to the EU School Fruit Scheme (SFS) while “the whole scheme will be evaluated for subsidiarity, proportionality and better regulation reasons as part of the CAP simplification.” [Annex 2 - Commission Work Programme 2015](#). N 12, COM/2014/0032 2014/0014/COD – Page 3.

(2) [Open Letter] [Save the EU School Fruit Scheme: 'Better Regulation' cannot go against the wellbeing of European children](#)

(3) The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), EuroHealthNet, EuroCoop, Freshfel Europe, International Diabetes Federation (Europe), the Standing Committee of European Doctors (CPME), European Heart Network (EHN), Slow Food, Aprifel (l'Agence Fruits et Légumes), AREFLH (Assemblée des Régions Européennes Fruitières, Legumières et Horticoles), WCRFI (World Cancer Research Fund International), and the Association of Italian Chiropractors

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