

Mr Phil Hogan
Commissioner
Agriculture & Rural Development
European Commission
Rue de la Loi / Wetstraat 200
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 2 February 2018

RE.: Addressing societal concerns regarding sustainable agricultural production: Achieving a triple-win for economy, environment and health

Dear Commissioner Hogan,

The European Heart Network (EHN), the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and Freshfel Europe are writing to you further to the European Commission's Communication on ***The Future of Food and Farming***.

We appreciate the Communication's acknowledgement that the CAP has a role to play in promoting healthier nutrition, helping to reduce obesity and malnutrition, and making nutritionally valuable products, such as fruits and vegetables, easily available for EU citizens. It is not the first time that a Commission Communication on the EU's Common Agricultural Policy expresses the intention to include health and nutrition in the regulatory framework that forms the CAP, but it is unprecedented that such intent has been formulated so clearly. From here, the EU can only go forward with a CAP that has healthy sustainable diets as a prominent objective; it is essential that the intention is translated into concrete mechanisms with sufficient budgets.

The EU has signed up to 17 Sustainable Development Goals. One of these goals is to reduce by one third premature mortality from chronic diseases and promote mental health and well-being by 2030. What and how we produce and promote food is decisive for achieving this goal as many of the major chronic diseases, such as heart disease and stroke, are diet-related. For example, if all EU citizens achieved a consumption of 400g/capita/day of fruit and vegetables (the minimum recommended level), almost 50 000 deaths from heart disease and stroke could be prevented; if the consumption increased to 600g/capita/day, 135 000 deaths from these diseases could be prevented.¹ Freshfel Europe's annual Consumption Monitor indicates that average consumption in most of the Member States is below the minimum recommended daily level of 400g/capita/day. The EU promotion policy and the EU school fruit and vegetables scheme are tools that in recent years have assisted the sector in remedying this situation. However, much more effort is still needed.

Premature deaths and ill health due to chronic diseases impose a high cost to the EU economy. In 2016, OECD² estimated the potential economic loss at EUR 115 billion from more than half a million people dying prematurely (i.e. aged between 25 and 64) from four major chronic diseases (cardiovascular diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases and diabetes). This figure does not even include the economic loss from the lower employment rates and the lower productivity of people living with these chronic diseases.

We appreciate that the CAP alone cannot solve the high prevalence of overweight, obesity and chronic diseases in the EU, but it can significantly contribute if it sets the right incentive. For example,

¹ <http://www.ehnheart.org/publications-and-papers/publications/114:fruit-and-vegetable-policy-in-the-european-union.html>

Figures are for EU 25

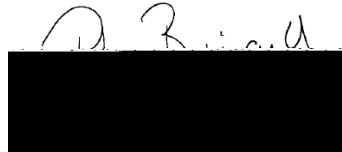
² <http://www.oecd.org/health/europe-paying-a-heavy-price-for-chronic-diseases-finds-new-oecd-ec-report.htm>

incentives can help to shift from high levels of meat and animal product consumption towards a higher level of consumption of plant-based foods, which would reflect dietary guidelines. This would also help to meet climate change goals and address other environmental challenges. Finally, it is also worth underlining that fruit and vegetables - besides their health and environmental benefits - also make an important contribution (about 20%) to the EU agricultural value output, with a broad basis of direct and indirect jobs in rural areas. By designing the future CAP smartly, the EU can address citizens' concerns and achieve a triple-win for economy, environment and health.

We would be very happy to discuss this proposition with you.



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