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'Farm to Fork': EU makes welcome strides towards greener and healthier food

Today, the European Commission has unveiled its much-awaited ['Farm to Fork' Strategy](#) for shifting EU food production and consumption onto a more sustainable path. BEUC welcomes the EU Commission's plans to make food healthier and greener.

Drawing lessons from the COVID-19 crisis, the Strategy brings to the fore the importance of being in good health – which is widely defined by what and how much we eat. Moreover, it rightly puts centre stage the need for a more resilient food system, capable of guaranteeing food security at all times.

Monique Goyens, BEUC's Director General, commented:

"This Strategy is a milestone on the EU's path to sustainable food production and consumption. While we would have hoped for some follow-up actions to happen sooner, at least Europe is now on the right track to a more sustainable food and farming system.

"We are glad the EU Commission has made it clear that it plans to propose a mandatory front-of-pack nutritional label. But why wait until the end of 2022 to kick off talks for an EU-wide label? Numerous studies have proven Nutri-Score is the label consumers understand best and six EU countries have already endorsed it.

"Better information on food origin and sustainability is also good news as consumers are hungry to know more about what is on their plates. However, relying on individual consumer choice alone will not be enough to change food habits if the healthy and sustainable option is insufficiently available or the most expensive one.

"It is encouraging that the Strategy pinpoints measures to improve product recipes and foster more responsible marketing and advertising, but we need them to be binding. Codes of conduct, pledges and other self-regulation tools have proven toothless in making the healthy and sustainable choice the easy one for consumers.

"Consumers should no longer be misled by claims which disguise sugar-laden snacks or yoghurts as healthy options. It was high time the Commission finally committed to preventing claims – such as 'boosts your immune system' and 'high in fibre' – from appearing on unhealthy foods.¹ It is all the more relevant today when overweight or obese people run higher risks to develop diseases such as diabetes and cancer, but also complications from diseases such as COVID-19."

Background

The EU sustainable food [blueprint](#) is a major component of the overarching [Green Deal](#), published in December 2019. Released with a two-month delay, it comes together with an Action Plan listing 27 measures which pave the way for greener food production, healthier and more sustainable diets, and less food waste.

These measures – many still subject to further studies, consultations, and other impact assessments – include notably:

- A proposal for harmonised mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling to enable consumers to make health conscious food choices (by Q4 2022)
- A proposal to require origin indication for certain products (by Q4 2022)
- Nutrient profiles to restrict the use of nutrition and health claims on food that is high in salt, sugar and/or fat (by Q4 2022)
- Initiatives to stimulate reformulation of processed food, including the setting of maximum levels for certain nutrients (by Q4 2021)
- A revised EU legislation on Food Contact Materials to improve food safety, ensure consumers' health and reduce the environmental footprint of the sector (by Q4 2022)
- A proposal for a sustainable food labelling framework to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices (by 2024).

ENDS

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¹ The EU Commission still has not set 'nutrient profiles', a tool which would restrict the use of dodgy claims. It is over 11 years past the deadline set in the Regulation on Food Information to Consumers. See BEUC press release ['EU Commission misses deadline by 10 years to tackle misleading use of food claims'](#), January 2019.



