



IPCC findings confirm urgency to make sustainable healthy diets easy, says NGO coalition

Brussels, 20 March 2023

In light of the findings to be released today by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that changes to our diets can substantially slash greenhouse gas emissions,¹ a coalition of EU-wide organisations is calling for better 'food environments' in the EU. This means concrete measures to make healthy, more plant-based diets with 'less and better' animal products the easy choice for European consumers.

The three public health, animal and consumer advocates are joining forces as the European Commission is due to propose a landmark law on sustainable food systems in September. The law is expected to recognise the role and influence of 'food environments' in shaping consumer food choices.

Food is among the sectors where demand-side changes can be most impactful. Yet currently, food environments largely push consumers towards unhealthy and unsustainable foods which are the most available, advertised, and often the cheapest options too. IPCC experts recognise the right policies and infrastructure need to be in place to enable shifts to sustainable healthy diets.² Changes to our lifestyles and behaviour, including the food on our plates, can result in a 40-70% drop in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050 while also improving health and wellbeing.³

Eurogroup for Animals, the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) therefore urge action to:

- Ensure that foods contributing to sustainable healthy diets are the most advertised and promoted;
- Make sustainable and healthy foods more affordable;
- Make food products healthier and sustainable by design through new minimum legal requirements;
- Ensure that these minimum requirements also apply to imported foods.

Reineke Hamelers, Eurogroup for Animals Chief Executive Officer, commented:

"European citizens care deeply about animal welfare and have made strong calls for animal welfare to be improved. Products from higher welfare systems in combination with more plant-based food on European plates are also good for the planet and health. Still we see numerous campaigns promoting the consumption of animal products in the EU. This needs to change. Therefore we are joining forces with consumer and health organisations to make sure that the healthy, sustainable option is the one that is the most promoted along the lines of 'less and better'."

¹ The [Synthesis Report](#), the closing chapter of IPCC sixth assessment cycle, will integrate the findings of previous reports released by IPCC during this cycle which began in 2015, including that of Working Group III on 'Mitigation of Climate Change' which tackled demand-side mitigation solutions.

² Which in the EU means eating more fruit, vegetables, wholegrains, and pulses, and 'less and better' meat and dairy.

³ See IPCC Working Group III contribution [published on 4 April 2022](#).

Monique Goyens, BEUC Director General, commented:

"Sustainable healthy diets are a win-win for health, climate and food security. Most consumers are willing to change their food habits, such as eating 'less and better' meat and more fruit, vegetables and pulses. But that is no easy task. Change must be rolled out at several levels to make the healthy sustainable choice the obvious choice. Regulators, food producers, and retailers have a crucial role to play to adjust pricing, marketing, and every other factor that pushes us to buy one food product over another."

Milka Sokolovic, EPHA Director General, commented:

"Making healthy and climate smart food choices the easiest options for all is not just needed to reduce the very real threats to health posed by climate change highlighted in the IPCC report. It's also needed to help tackle the burgeoning burden of ill health that poor diets largely contribute towards."

ENDS

Notes:

Eurogroup for Animals, the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) have joined forces for a project called "Put change on the menu" to move the debate around food environments⁴ to the forefront and campaign for food environments that promote healthy sustainable diets with 'less and better' animal products.

In its 2020 'Farm to Fork' Strategy for fairer, healthier, and greener food and farming, the European Commission announced a new EU legislative Framework for a Sustainable Food System for 2023. This horizontal law will introduce definitions, sustainability objectives and principles to ensure that existing and future EU legislation about food consistently contributes towards the goal of a sustainable food system which operates within planetary boundaries.

For Eurogroup for Animals, BEUC and EPHA, it is vital that the Framework for a Sustainable Food System paves the ground for further concrete policy measures addressing specific elements of food environments such as advertising and marketing, labelling, public procurement and the affordability of healthy and sustainable food.

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[Eurogroup for Animals](#) represents over eighty animal protection organisations across the EU, UK, Switzerland, Serbia, Norway, and Australia. Since its foundation in 1980, the organisation has succeeded in encouraging the EU to adopt higher legal standards for animal protection. Eurogroup for Animals reflects public opinion through its members and has both the scientific and technical expertise to provide authoritative advice on issues relating to animal protection.

⁴ Food environments have been defined as the "physical, economic, political and socio-cultural context in which consumers engage with the food system to make their decisions about acquiring, preparing and consuming food."

Eurogroup for Animals is a founding member of the [World Federation for Animals](#) which unites the animal protection movement at the global level.

[The European Consumer Organisation](#) (BEUC) acts as the umbrella group in Brussels for 46 independent national consumer organisations. Our main role is to represent them to the European institutions and defend the interests of European consumers.

[The European Public Health Alliance](#) (EPHA) is a change agent, a leading European civil society alliance in Brussels, made up of public health NGOs, patient groups, health professionals and disease groups, working to improve health and strengthen the voice of public health in Europe.