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Bright lights take aim at EU headquarters: NGOs demand action for sustainable food systems

On Sunday night, the European Commission headquarters in Brussels were lit up with bright lights beaming a clear message to EU policymakers: fulfil your promises on the Farm to Fork Strategy and the urgent transition toward sustainable food systems.

Against the backdrop of the EU Agricultural Outlook conference, a major European Commission event on food and farming, some of Europe's largest green NGOs and consumer associations joined forces to call out the European Commission on its failure to deliver both its promised proposal on the framework law for sustainable food systems (SFS) and its revision of the outdated animal welfare legislation.

As a cornerstone of the EU Green Deal, the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#) included a series of vital policies and initiatives to address the growing overlapping crises surrounding the state of our environment, people's health, and the welfare of animals.

The action's name "Broken Promises" hints at the [State of the Union speech](#) Commission President Ursula von der Leyen delivered last September. The speech's motto was "Promises kept", which is only partly true. While the Commission has shown partial commitment to delivering on some policies, two major promises remain glaringly absent: the framework law for sustainable food systems (SFS Law) and the revision of the animal welfare legislation.

Monique Goyens Director General of the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) commented:

"A food system which is making unhealthy diets the norm is not only causing ill health for consumers across Europe, it is also harming our planet. This same system has allowed food waste in Europe to pile up to record levels, at a time when more and more Europeans are going to bed hungry. The EU must do everything it can to make the sustainable food choice the easy, attractive, and affordable one. And the SFS law is the first step to do so."

Reineke Hamelers, Chief Executive Officer at Eurogroup for Animals (EfA) stated:

"Intensive unsustainable farming systems are the cause of immense animal suffering. Chickens, fish, pigs, and many more species are being treated as commodities and products in order to produce cheap and unhealthy meat and dairy as quickly as possible. Evidence shows that this industrial system harms everyone: animals, the planet and humans. As showcased by many ECIs and polls, citizens want change. And the good news is that change is perfectly possible if policymakers dare to take the right decisions and challenge the harmful status quo. Frontrunners in animal farming are leading the way. The time is now for the European Commission to make a firm commitment and make progress on the legislation."

Dr Milka Sokolovic, Director General of the European Public Health Alliance, said:

"Instead of promoting the health of people and planet, our food systems contribute to a huge burden of ill health and early death. This massively increases the risk of anti-microbial resistance, and contributes to climate change and environmental degradation. The EU must urgently recraft its food systems so that human and planetary health are protected. Making healthy sustainable food choices the easy, default option IS an option."

Faustine Bas-Defossez, Director for Nature, Health and Environment at the European Environmental Bureau, noted:

"A key pillar of the European Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy, the SFS Law is a unique opportunity for this European Commission to pave the way for a future where everyone has access to healthy and sustainable food, farmers are supported, ecosystems are protected, and animal rearing is not defined by suffering. The Commission must fulfil its duty to people and planet and deliver this vital proposal - as well as its promised revision of EU animal welfare legislation - before the end of its mandate."



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