

Ref.: BEUC-X-2023-116

Brussels, 22 September 2023

Subject: BEUC's vision for a Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Food in the EU

Dear President von der Leyen,

I am writing following your announcement, in your State of the Union address, of the Commission's intention to launch a 'strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture'.

BEUC fully shares your conviction that producing sufficient healthy and nutritious food for European citizens can - and must - go hand in hand with protecting our planet. Like you, we also believe that we need to address polarisation in the public debate surrounding food and farming issues if we are to tackle the challenges facing our food systems - from climate change and diet-related diseases through to environmental pollution, food waste, antimicrobial resistance, and unequal access to healthy and sustainable food.

As shopping bills keep rising, including for essential items such as food, falling standards of living have become consumers' number one concern. Still, as many as eight in ten continue to worry about the climate emergency. They expect the EU to prioritise the fight against poverty, public health, and action against climate change.¹ Food is at the crossroad of all these concerns.

Consumer organisations, therefore, stand ready to participate in an open, participatory, and inclusive debate on a European vision for the future of food. As a first contribution, we would like to share with you five key principles which should guide the design and conduct of the strategic dialogue for it to be successful:

1. Legislative work must go on.
2. Focus on *food*, not just agriculture.
3. Make it inclusive with all those concerned at the table.
4. Encourage a science-based debate.
5. Address sustainable food consumption.

The annexed document elaborates our reflections on the principles.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to engaging with the Commission on this important dialogue.

Yours sincerely,

Monique Goyens
Director General

This letter has also been sent to Executive Vice-President Šefčovič and Commissioners Kyriakides, Wojciechowski, and Sinkevičius.

¹ <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230109IPR65918/europeans-concerned-by-cost-of-living-crisis-and-expect-additional-eu-measures>