

The Consumer Voice in Europe

Ref.: BEUC-X-2024-033/IPO/CPE/cm

Brussels, 20 March 2024

Subject: The consumer perspective on the food and agriculture aspects of the 2040 climate target communication

Dear Attaché,

With a view to the ENVI Council's upcoming exchange of views on the Communication on Europe's 2040 climate target at its 25 March meeting, the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC) wishes to share some thoughts and recommendations regarding the **potential of the food and agriculture sector to contribute to the EU's emissions reduction goals**.

For Europe to achieve its health, sustainability and climate targets, the food and agriculture sectors cannot be left untapped. 10.3% of the EU's GHG emissions¹ come from agriculture and 81-86% of those come from the animal sector.² At the same time, GHG emissions from the agriculture sector have essentially been stagnating since 2005 and are expected to only slightly decrease between now and 2040.³ Yet, **the Communication does not propose a quantitative objective for cuts in agricultural emissions** such as CH₄ emissions from livestock or N₂O emissions from soils. We believe that this is a major missed opportunity to pave the way for long-awaited measures aiming to make our food system more sustainable.

Another major blind spot in the Communication is the lack of mention of lifestyle changes, including dietary shifts, as a key lever for cutting emissions. **Demand-side measures have been recognised to play a major role in reducing GHG emissions** and can even lead to significantly higher emissions reductions than for example technological improvements at farm level. Current European diets have a considerable impact on climate with unhealthy diets high in animal products and foods high in fat, sugars and salt contributing to disproportionately high emissions. However, 2/3 of consumers⁴ are ready to change their dietary habits for environmental reasons yet face hurdles. They expect policymakers to make it easy and affordable for them to shift to healthier, climate-friendly diets rich in vegetables, fruits, legumes, nuts and whole grains.

In light of the above, we call on you to ensure that the future policy framework that will be developed by the next European Commission in support of meeting the 2040 climate target **includes initiatives and actions aimed at transforming food environments, so that sustainable healthy diets become more available, affordable, and attractive** for European consumers. The proposal for a Sustainable Food Systems Framework Law, in particular, must be high on the next Commission's agenda.

.../...

¹ https://food.ec.europa.eu/horizontal-topics/farm-fork-strategy_en

² https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/news/commission-publishes-external-study-future-eu-livestock-2020-10-14_en

³ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps/figures/historical-1990-2020-and-projected>

⁴ https://www.beuc.eu/sites/default/files/publications/beuc-x-2020-042_consumers_and_the_transition_to_sustainable_food.pdf

For more information on the co-benefits for health and climate of promoting dietary shifts and on the need for food environments to provide better options for consumers, the brief 'Shifting diets for health and climate' we prepared together with the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) and Eurogroup for Animals is attached to this letter.

We thank you for your consideration and remain at your disposal for any question(s) you may have, or should you wish to discuss the above further in a meeting.

Yours faithfully,

Irina Popescu
Food Policy Officer

Camille Perrin
Senior Food Policy Officer