



Brussels, 23/03/2023

Subject: a mandatory EU-wide front-of-pack nutrition labelling system is an urgent tool for public health

Dear President von der Leyen,
Dear Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans,
Dear Commissioner Stella Kyriakides,

The food system is currently responsible for one-third of all human-caused greenhouse gas emissions¹ and is a driver of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation. It is essential to transform the food system to make it fairer, more sustainable and more plant-based.

We are concerned to observe that the most ambitious reforms announced by the Farm to Fork Strategy are delayed or entirely blocked by political conflicts: the revision of legislation on Food Contact Materials; legislating for higher animal welfare standards; or setting the “nutrient profiles” for the amount of sugar or fat content. Everything that is necessary to implement the Farm to Fork objectives on the consumption side is lacking. We are particularly concerned about the delay of the revision of the Food Information to Consumers Regulation and that the debate around front-of-pack nutritional labelling has become less grounded in scientific evidence or public health concerns.

Malnutrition due to the lack of access on affordable and healthy food are associated with increased risk for multiple chronic health conditions such as diabetes, obesity, heart disease, mental health disorders and other chronic diseases. Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are responsible for 77 % of the disease burden in the European region and account for the largest part of countries’ healthcare expenditures, costing EU economies 115 billion euro, or 0.8% of GDP, annually². Overweight and obesity are an important risk factor for NCDs. In the EU, over half of adults and one in three children are already overweight or obese.

For years, health experts, doctors’ associations and consumer organisations have asked for effective political measures to stop this health crisis. One important tool is a Front-Of-Pack Nutritional Label (FOPNL), which has been identified by international public health bodies such as the World Health Organization as a key measure to help consumers make more informed, more balanced and healthier food choices.

A mandatory and harmonised scheme across the EU also has the advantage of providing all citizens with the same level of information, regardless of their country of residence. Currently, over ten different FOPNL schemes exist in the EU, which can lead to market fragmentation and confuse consumers.

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s43016-021-00225-9>

² OECD/EU (2016), Health at a Glance: Europe 2016 – State of Health in the EU Cycle, OECD Publishing, Paris.

In an October 2021 resolution on the Farm to Fork Strategy, Members of the European Parliament called on the Commission to ensure that a mandatory and harmonised EU front-of-pack nutrition label is developed based on robust, independent scientific evidence and demonstrated consumer understanding, with an interpretive element to compare product information.

However, the legislative proposal on FOPNL, which had been announced by the end of 2022, has still not been presented. We, the undersigned Members of the European Parliament, therefore urge you to deliver a strong proposal for a harmonised, consumer-friendly and mandatory EU front-of-pack nutrition labelling system without further delay. We count on you to prioritise public health concerns, as health is a fundamental right embedded in EU treaties, and a collective responsibility within the European Union.

Yours sincerely,

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