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**Date: 04/09/2024**

**Reference: BEUC-PR-2024-027**

### **EU Strategic Dialogue on the future of agriculture delivers promising results for consumers**

The Strategic Dialogue for the future of Agriculture just [published](#) its report which rightfully urges EU and national policymakers to make the healthy and sustainable food choice the easy one for consumers. BEUC, who was among the participants, hails the outcome of the 7-month long deliberative process as a potential game changer. For this to happen, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen must reflect the Dialogue's output in her upcoming Vision for Agriculture and Food and the concrete measures which must follow.

#### **Agustín Reyna, Director General of BEUC, commented:**

“After months-long of both intense and constructive talks, representatives from the whole food chain agreed to an ambitious direction of travel for the future of food and agriculture. From retailers, farmers, food industry, to consumers, environment and animal welfare NGOs, all views could be freely expressed at the negotiation table, yet in a frank and good faith spirit. The consensus that emerged from this diverse group of stakeholders, beyond polarization, brings unique legitimacy to our recommendations. We count on Ms von der Leyen to integrate them in her upcoming Vision for Agriculture and Food.

“Consumers are willing to play their part in the transition, yet they need a hand. That is why it is so important that the Strategic Dialogue has called on policymakers, food companies, retailers and all actors that shape our eating habits to make it easy for consumers to choose healthy and sustainable food, supporting the shift to more plant-rich diets. From marketing and labelling through to public procurement and offering healthier and greener recipes, the Dialogue acknowledged that a lot can be done to support consumers in adopting diets which are good for health and the planet.

“Price is a key concern on consumers' minds, and the Dialogue hit the nail on the head stressing that food should remain affordable to all as we move forward with the transition. We throw our weight behind the call on governments to make the most of fiscal policies, such as cutting VAT, to steer consumers towards sustainable food choices, while providing adequate social and financial support to lower-income groups to leave no one behind.

“We also welcome the Strategic Dialogue's support for a Common Agricultural Policy that gives EU taxpayers more bang for their buck. Moving away from the current ineffective model of area-based direct payments, income support should be much more targeted to farmers who need it most, while those who demonstrably engage in greener practices should be duly compensated.

“We wish the Dialogue’s recommendations were a bit bolder in some areas, including livestock and animal welfare, as well as trade and ensuring the EU stops importing food that does not meet our standards. But overall, the report offers a well-crafted, coherent and balanced vision for the future of EU’s food and farming systems. Now the ball is in President von der Leyen’s court to roll it out.”

## Background

The [Strategic Dialogue](#) was announced by President von der Leyen in September 2023 in her State of the European Union speech, as part of the EU Commission’s response to the farmers’ protests. Launched in January 2024, it brought together stakeholders from across the whole agri-food chain, as well as non-governmental organisations and civil society representatives, financial institutions and academia.

The Strategic Dialogue was tasked to develop a shared vision and recommendations for the future of EU food and farming, which will inform the Vision for food and agriculture to be presented by the new Commission within its first 100 days.

## Some positive outcomes:

- EU countries should update their national recommendations for healthy eating, so they factor in sustainability, and promote their uptake by consumers;
- The Commission should evaluate current national measures and industry voluntary pledges around food marketing to children and come up with a legislative proposal by 2026, if they are deemed insufficient;
- The Commission should review and, where needed, update EU food labelling rules to ensure consumers are empowered to make fully informed choices regarding the nutritional value and sustainability impact (including animal welfare) of the food they purchase;
- Food makers should step up efforts to alter their recipes to make products healthier and greener;
- The Commission should develop an EU action plan for plant-based foods by 2026 (Denmark already has [one](#));
- Updated EU rules on public procurement should incentivise EU countries to procure food that is sustainable, healthy and from high animal welfare production systems.

## More information

- BEUC two-pager [‘BEUC’s vision for a strategic dialogue on the future of food in the EU’](#), 2023.
- Joint statement, [‘Stakeholders of all horizons stand ready for the strategic dialogue on the future of agriculture’](#), January 2024.

