

Farm to Fork strategy

An overview of Parliament's positions

KEY FINDINGS

The aim of this briefing is to give an overview of positions the European Parliament has taken over the last twenty years that are relevant to the Farm to Fork strategy, the component of the European Green Deal that aims for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system. Despite it being a new strategy, most of its 27 actions are connected to already existing legislation and as such, Parliament has previously given its opinion on the subjects covered by the strategy. This briefing presents a short summary of Parliament's most relevant positions in the past.



In 2019, the European Commission presented an [initial roadmap](#) of the key policies and measures needed to achieve the European Green Deal. The food system is one of the areas in which a transition onto a more sustainable path is needed, and European food should become the global standard for sustainability. The Commission sees new opportunities for all operators in the European food chain to tackle pollution, loss of biodiversity, climate change, food waste, and unhealthy diets. The Farm to Fork (F2F) strategy should pave the way for this transition, a proposal welcomed by the European Parliament in its 2020 [Resolution on](#)

[the European Green Deal](#). The [Strategy was presented](#) later on 20 May 2020 with an [action plan consisting of 27 measures](#), on most of which the European Parliament had previously expressed its opinion.

The first two actions described in the strategy are of a rather general nature: a proposal for a **legislative framework for sustainable food systems** and the development of a **contingency plan for ensuring food supply and food security**. Already in 2010, Parliament [noted](#) that agriculture, as one of the main sources of two major greenhouse gases (nitrous oxide and methane) which are generated by various biological processes linked to agricultural production, is contributing to climate change while also being very vulnerable to its adverse impact. In the Green Deal Resolution, Parliament called for a sustainable Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to deliver more environmental and climate benefits and to manage volatility and crises in a better way. It welcomed the Commission's commitment to tackle the pressure from pesticides on the environment and health, it stressed that legislation on food contact materials should be revised, it considered it important to raise existing animal welfare standards, and it supported the Commission's intention to explore new ways of giving consumers better information.

Parliament stressed in its resolution of 7 June 2016 on technological solutions for sustainable agriculture in the EU that innovation has the potential to contribute to achieving a more sustainable agriculture in the EU ([2015/2225\(INI\)](#)). The Commission is therefore urged to ensure that innovation is explicitly taken into



account in forthcoming reviews and reforms of relevant legislation. It is considered essential that reasonable EU regulation, oriented towards consumer safety and health and environmental protection, based on independent, peer-reviewed science, enables EU farm produce to be competitive and attractive on the internal and world markets. Parliament stressed in its [resolution of 30 May 2018](#) on the future of food and farming (2018/2037(INI)) on the basis of a report drawn up by the AGRI Committee that “the overriding priorities of reform must be the principles set out in the Treaty of Rome, the integrity of the single market and a truly common policy, adequately financed by the EU, that is modern and result-orientated, supports sustainable agriculture, and ensures safe, high-quality and varied food, employment and development in rural areas” (paragraph 1), and further:

- welcomed “[...] that one of the CAP’s objectives shall be to enhance and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources and to contribute to the environmental and climate objectives of the EU” (paragraph 2);
- underlined “the need to uphold the conditions of competition within the single market and to guarantee a level playing field as regards access to support for farmers in different Member States or in different regions, together with the need for adequate and efficient solutions to minimise any risk of distortion of competition or risks for cohesion” (paragraph 6);
- considered “[...] the transition of all European farms towards sustainability, and for all European farms to be fully integrated into the circular economy, combining economic with environmental performance standards and with no reduction in social or employment standards, to be a top priority;” (paragraph 38);
- emphasised “that the focus in the future of farming should be on producing high-quality food, as that is where Europe’s competitive advantage lies; stresses that EU standards must be maintained and strengthened where feasible; calls for measures to further increase the long-term productivity and competitiveness of the food production sector, and to introduce new technologies and a more efficient use of resources, thereby strengthening the EU’s role as a world leader” (paragraph 164); and
- called “for enhanced support for and the promotion of local markets and short food supply chains; stresses the need to develop local services relating to short supply chains” (paragraph 135).

Ensure sustainable food production

The next set of actions in the F2F strategy are connected through their collective aim of **ensuring a sustainable food production**. The F2F strategy, in line with the European Green Deal, does not only aim to improve sustainability of production methods in the EU farming sector, but to transform Europe’s food systems in the broadest sense. The renewed CAP for 2021-2027 will play an important role in this, as well as a review of the pesticides, animal welfare and feed additives legislation and the introduction of a new EU carbon farming initiative to reward farming practices that remove CO₂ from the atmosphere.

Common Agricultural Policy

Part of the F2F strategy is to adopt **recommendations to each Member State addressing the nine specific objectives of the CAP** before the draft Strategic Plans are formally submitted. This was one of the conclusions in the Commission’s [Analysis of links between the CAP Reform and Green Deal](#).

Parliament has not discussed Member State-specific recommendations so far (as this is a new concept not included in the 2018 CAP reform proposals). More generally, Members expressed support for the two-pillared structure of the CAP: direct support for farmers/market measures, and rural development. A [recent resolution](#), which was adopted by the [plenary on 23 October 2020](#), amended the Commission proposal in order to limit financial transfers between the two pillars (Amendment 1136, Article 90) and to oblige Member States lay down the definition of agricultural activity *in accordance with good farming practice* as defined by Member States (Amendment 78, Article 3(1)(a)).

Pesticides

Regulation of the use of pesticides plays an important role in ensuring sustainable food production and the F2F strategy includes three actions on this issue. Firstly, it proposes a revision of the [Sustainable Use of Pesticides Directive](#) to significantly **reduce use and risk and dependency on pesticides** and to enhance Integrated Pest Management. In particular, the Commission aims to reduce the overall use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50% and the use of more hazardous pesticides by 50% by 2030. Secondly, the F2F strategy includes a revision of the relevant implementing Regulations under the Plant Protection Products framework to facilitate placing on the market of **plant protection products (PPPs) containing biological active substances**. The third action is a proposal for a revision of the [Pesticides Statistics Regulation](#) to overcome data gaps and reinforce evidence-based policy making. Parliament previously acknowledged the need for a European legal framework in the field of pesticides since their use persists: it pointed out that the use of PPPs in the EU between 1992 and 2003 remained significant and has not decreased despite the proactive policies successfully pursued in some Member States to reduce the use of farm pesticides. In 2007, Members welcomed the [Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides](#) but noted that it covers only PPPs, which constitute only a part of pesticides. They furthermore regretted that health was only marginally mentioned in the Thematic Strategy, despite the link between pesticides and immunological effects, neurotoxic disorders and cancer.

Parliament called on the Commission to support Member States in setting up a system of taxes or levies in order to influence – quantitatively and qualitatively – pesticide use. It also stressed the need to amend European trading standards relating to the shape, size and aesthetic qualities of fresh fruit and vegetables, which encourage the intensive use of pesticides.

In their [Directive establishing a framework for Community Action to achieve a sustainable use of pesticides](#), adopted in 2009, Parliament and the Council decided that Member States should:

- adopt national action plans (NAPs) to set up quantitative objectives, targets, measures, and timetables to reduce risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment. However, Parliament dropped its requirement to insert minimum targets for NAPs and decided that the targets may cover different areas of concern, for example worker protection, protection of the environment, residues, use of specific techniques or use in specific crops;
- take all necessary measures to promote low pesticide-input farming, including integrated pest management, and to ensure that professional users of pesticides shift towards a more environmentally-friendly use of all available crop protection measures with a priority for low-risk, non-chemical alternatives wherever possible. Member States had to ensure that all professional users of pesticides implement the general standards for integrated pest management at the latest by 1 January 2014;
- set up systems of training, education and awareness-raising for distributors, advisors, and professional users of pesticides as well as for the general public so that those who use or are exposed to pesticides are fully aware of the potential risks to human health and the environment and of the appropriate measures to reduce those risks as much as possible;
- ban aerial spraying and only allow it in special cases approved by competent authorities; and
- make sure that the aquatic environment and drinking water supplies as well as Natura 2000 sites are safe from the impact of pesticides and that their use is minimised or prohibited in specific areas used by the general public or by vulnerable groups.

In 2019, the Special parliamentary committee on the authorisation procedure for pesticides (PEST) concluded its work with a [final report](#), adopted in plenary. In the report, Members called on the Commission to, inter alia, amend the Regulation concerning the placing of PPPs on the market in such a way that the use, but also the placing on the market, of low-risk PPPs is made easier for operators on the procedural level. They noted that only ten substances are approved as low-risk active substances out of a total of almost 500 available on the EU market. Parliament furthermore called on the Commission and the Member States to:

- promote the development and use of sustainable and ecological alternatives to PPPs, integrated pest management measures, and low-risk pesticides. It acknowledged the need for more research into and development of these products, hence it called on the Commission to assess options to stimulate innovation in this field;
- improve their data exchange on safer PPPs which could replace PPPs containing candidates for substitution;
- ensure that the requirements in the Regulation for the prioritisation of non-chemical methods are properly implemented.

In its [2019 Resolution](#) on the implementation of the sustainable use of pesticides Directive, Parliament noted that the Commission's 2017 progress report identified significant gaps in the NAPs of Member States, suggesting a lower commitment to protecting the environment and health in some countries, possibly resulting in unfair market competition and an undermining of the single market. Members regretted that only five NAPs set high-level measurable targets, of which four relate to risk reduction and only one to use reduction. In the 2017 [Resolution on low-risk pesticides of biological origin](#), Members also noted that products containing low-risk active substances of biological origin had been refused authorisation by a certain number of Member States owing to their perceived lower efficacy as compared to synthetic chemical pesticides, without any regard to the ongoing innovation in the sector for low-risk pesticides of biological origin, without considering the resource efficiency benefits for organic farming, and without considering agricultural, health and environmental costs of certain other plant protection products. Parliament thus called on Member States to:

- adhere to the established timelines for delivering revised NAPs and to deliver clear quantitative targets and a measurable overall objective of an immediate and long-term effective reduction in pesticide use;
- strictly follow the ban on imports of prohibited pesticides into the EU from third countries, and to increase controls on imported food;
- move forward with the adoption and implementation of harmonised risk indicators as recently proposed by the Commission, in order to properly monitor the reduction impacts of pesticides; and
- accelerate the evaluation, authorisation, registration and monitoring of the use of low-risk PPPs of biological origin while maintaining risk assessment at a high level.

The Commission was called on to:

- immediately prohibit the use of pesticides with active substances that are mutagenic, carcinogenic, or toxic for reproduction, or have endocrine-disrupting characteristics and are damaging to humans or animals. The use of PPPs in areas used by the general public or vulnerable groups should no longer be allowed;
- establish a system for the regular collection of statistical data on pesticide use; and
- set up a pan-European Platform on Sustainable Pesticides Use that would bring together sectorial stakeholders and representatives at local and regional level.

Parliament finally called for the Horizon Europe programme, the Multiannual Framework 2021-2027, other EU financial instruments, and Member States to provide sufficient funding to promote independent research on the impact of PPPs on human and animal health, the environment and agricultural production as well as the development and marketing of low-risk and biological alternatives.

Animal welfare

Moreover, the F2F strategy includes an evaluation and revision of the existing **animal welfare** legislation, including on animal transport and slaughter of animals. As to the latter, the 2009 [Regulation on Protection of animals at the time of killing](#) (amended in 2013 by the [Official Controls Regulation](#)) and the 2005 [Regulation on Protection of animals during transport within and outside the EU](#) are relevant legislation on

this subject. In these texts as well as in a [resolution on the implementation](#) of the Regulation on the protection of animals during transport within and outside the EU, adopted in 2019, Parliament's positions include the following:

- it adopted an amendment which calls on Member States to ensure that food business operators offer all assistance needed to ensure that official controls carried out by the competent authority can be performed effectively, as well as an amendment stating that Member States shall lay down the rules on sanctions applicable to infringements of feed and food law and protection of animal health and welfare. Parliament avoided standardising the costs of inspections across the EU, for fear that this would drive businesses - in particular slaughterhouses - out of the EU altogether;
- Members deleted the prohibition of the use of electric currents that do not stun or kill the animals under controlled circumstances. They made certain amendments on the methods of stunning and killing and operational rules for slaughterhouses, in particular stipulating that carbon dioxide at concentrations over 30% shall not be used to stun or slaughter poultry in a slaughterhouse;
- Members called on the Commission to ensure an effective and uniform enforcement of existing EU legislation on animal transport across all Member States and to develop a harmonised EU sanction system, to draw up a list of operators who have perpetrated repeated and serious breaches of the animal transport Regulation, and to develop geolocation systems to enable tracking of the animals' location and the duration of journeys in transport vehicles;
- Members suggested alternative strategies to animal transport, such as local or mobile slaughter and meat processing facilities close to the place of rearing; and
- Members stated that unless transport standards in non-EU countries are aligned with the EU ones and properly enforced, the EU should seek to mitigate the differences through bilateral agreements or, if not possible, ban transport of live animals to these countries. Members also called for EU states bordering non-EU countries to provide rest areas where animals could be unloaded and given food and water while waiting to leave the EU.

Finally, Parliament recalled that animal cloning for food production purposes jeopardises the defining characteristics of the European farming model and that the majority of Union citizens disapprove of cloning for farming purposes due to, inter alia, animal welfare and general ethical concerns. Thus, Members supported a [Regulation](#) to prohibit the placing on the market and the import of animal clones and products and food from animal clones. According to the EP, the Regulation (which has been blocked in the Council for several years) should apply to all species of animals kept and reproduced for farming purposes and not only animals of the bovine, porcine, ovine, caprine and equine species as was proposed by the Commission. By means of an official EU-Survey, the Commission was requested to launch a public consultation aimed at assessing any new trends regarding consumers' perceptions of food products from cloned animals.

Other actions to ensure sustainable food production:

- Feed additives and Farm Sustainability Data Network

The F2F strategy includes a new revision of the **feed additives** Regulation to reduce the environmental impact of livestock farming, a relatively unexplored angle in this context. This [Regulation](#) was implemented with the purpose of establishing a Community procedure for authorising the placing on the market and use of feed additives and to lay down rules for the supervision and labelling of feed additives and premixtures. It was [amended in 2009](#) and [in 2019](#), first to simplify and consolidate legislation on animal feed and to bring it into line with food law, later to improve the transparency of scientific studies supporting marketing authorisation applications in the field of food safety. The F2F strategy also proposes a revision of the Farm Accountancy Data Network Regulation (FADN) to transform it into a **Farm Sustainability Data Network** with a view to contribute to a wide uptake of sustainable farming practices. Since the link between the FADN and sustainability is new, Parliament has not expressed an opinion that is relevant to this F2F action point.

- Competition rules and the position of primary producers in the food chain

Under F2F, the Commission envisages action to clarify the scope of **competition rules** in the TFEU in order to promote sustainability in collective actions, connected to the point that calls for legislative initiatives to enhance cooperation of primary producers to **support their position in the food chain** and non-legislative initiatives to **improve transparency**. In 2016, Parliament has [recalled](#) that it is essential to ensure that EU competition law takes into account the specific features of agriculture and serves the welfare of producers as well as consumers, who play an important role in the supply chain. It believes that EU competition law must create the conditions for a more efficient market that enables consumers to benefit from a wide range of quality products at competitive prices, while ensuring that primary producers have an incentive to invest and innovate without being forced out of the market by unfair trading practices. Members recognised the role of producer organisations and their associations in concentrating supply and improving marketing, planning and adjusting production to demand, optimising production costs and stabilising producer prices. They also called on the Commission to establish an EU observatory of agricultural markets, in order to improve transparency within the agri-food supply chain, to illuminate the choices of economic operators and all public authorities and to facilitate the identification and recording of market developments. In 2013, Parliament amended the [Regulation on Common organisation of the markets in agricultural products](#) in order to ensure that farmers' organisations will be given additional tools to help farmers cope with market volatility and strengthen their price bargaining position, particularly in the sectors of wine, beef and olive oil. Furthermore, in 2019, Parliament approved a [Directive](#) calling on Member States to ensure that a list of unfair commercial practices are prohibited.

- EU carbon farming initiative

The final F2F action connected to sustainable food production is an entirely new EU **carbon farming** initiative. In a [Communication of 17 September 2020, "Stepping up Europe's 2030 climate ambition"](#), the Commission acknowledged the need to incentivise individual farmers to store more carbon on their land. Carbon farming and certification of carbon removals should increasingly be deployed in the run up to 2030, and the carbon farming initiative will promote such new business models. There are no legislative precedents for this novel plan, however, Parliament might produce a report on this subject through its ENVI committee.

Stimulate sustainable food processing, wholesale, retail, hospitality and food services' practices

The F2F strategy also includes actions that aim to stimulate sustainable food processing, wholesale, retail, hospitality and food services' practices.

Corporate governance and responsible business and marketing conduct

In order to do so, the Commission will launch an initiative to improve the **corporate governance framework**, including a requirement for the food industry to integrate sustainability into corporate strategies. It will also develop an EU code and monitoring framework for **responsible business and marketing conduct** in the food supply chain. Parliament has [previously underlined](#) the importance of initiatives on corporate governance going hand in hand with initiatives on corporate social responsibility (CSR). It [stated that CSR can contribute](#) to achieving the objectives defined in the European Strategy for Sustainable Development, provided that companies go beyond aspirational commitments and do not just use it as a mere public relations exercise. Members stressed the desirability of transparency with regard to companies' environmental and social performance: they asked the Commission for proposals to give the public access to environmental, health and safety-related and human rights-based information held by companies with a view to facilitating external scrutiny of society. In other legislation, Parliament was also of the opinion that:

- large undertakings which were public-interest entities with more than 500 employees should include in the management report a non-financial statement containing details of the current and foreseeable impacts of the undertaking's operations on the environment, health and safety, the use of renewable and non-renewable energy, greenhouse gas emissions, water use and air pollution;
- information on sustainability should also cover, where appropriate, the subcontracting and supply chains, and companies should indicate in their reports the environmental standards they apply when they operate and invest in third countries;
- directors' performances should be assessed using both financial and non-financial performance criteria, including, where appropriate, environmental, social and governance factors, and long-term sustainability components should be included in managers' variable remuneration;
- the Commission should ensure a single point of coordination for the proposed European Alliance for Corporate Social Responsibility;
- the appointment of an EU ombudsman on CSR should be considered;
- future trade agreements negotiated by the Union should incorporate a chapter on sustainable development which includes a 'CSR clause', and a parliamentary monitoring mechanism should ensure the implementation of this clause; and
- the Commission should do more to combat 'greenwashing'.

Members opposed all measures that could result in additional administrative or financial constraints for SMEs but called for support of measures enabling SMEs to take joint action. They called on the Commission to introduce a European award scheme for socially responsible firms and partnerships and to consider, among other actions, whether a European social label could be introduced to this end. It should be noted that in a previous term, Parliament deleted clauses requesting a European product labelling standard in this context. To conclude, Parliament emphasised the need for any regulatory measures to be drawn up within a robust legal framework and in line with international standards, in order to avoid disparate national interpretations.

Reformulation of processed food and nutrient profiles

The controversial concept of **nutritional profiles** is brought back in the F2F strategy, which aims to set these profiles to restrict promotion of food high in salt, sugars and/or fat. Additionally, the strategy calls for initiatives to stimulate **reformulation** of processed food, including the determination of **maximum levels for certain nutrients**. Parliament has, in 2008, welcomed a [White Paper](#) as an important step in an overall strategy to stem the rise in obesity and overweight and address diet-related chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease including heart disease and stroke, cancer, and diabetes in Europe. Parliament expressed the following positions:

- it highlighted putting in place a policy geared to food quality and encourages the private sector to play a role in reducing obesity by developing new and healthier products;
- it believed that product reformulation is a powerful tool for reducing the intake of fat, sugar and salt in our diets and encourages food producers to further engage in reformulation of energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods in order to reduce fat, sugar and salt and enrich their fibre, fruit and vegetable content; and
- it recalled that frequent consumption of trans fatty acids (TFAs) has been associated with an increased risk of cardiovascular disease, infertility, endometriosis, gallstones, Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, obesity and some cancers. In the 2016 [Resolution on Transfats](#), Parliament thus called on the Commission to establish within two years, an EU legal limit on industrial TFAs, both as an ingredient and as a final product, in all food in order to reduce their intake among all population groups. In 2007, Parliament had also called for an EU-wide ban on artificial TFAs. The Commission has since adopted a Regulation limiting the amount of TFAs to 2%, to be complied with by April 2021.

In 2003, the Commission proposed legislation intended to ban all health claims on products which are rich in sugar, fat or salt. Initially, Parliament rejected the article on nutritional profiles. Only at second reading, it agreed with a compromise text reintroducing the concept which indicates appropriate ratios of salt, sugar and fat in any given product. The amended text ([Regulation 1924/2006](#) on nutrition and health claims made on food) now authorises nutrition claims on products with high sugar, fat or salt levels where a single nutrient exceeds the nutrient profile, and provided that a statement about the specific nutrient appears in close proximity to, on the same side and with the same prominence as the claim. Although the Commission (based on information provided by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and in close consultation with industry and consumer groups) should have come forward with proposals to set salt, sugar and fat ratios (nutrient profiles) for all new products sold on the EU market since 2009, the EU nutrient profiles have not been set to date.

Food contact materials

In order to improve food safety, ensure citizens' health and reduce the environmental footprint of the sector, the F2F strategy includes a proposal for a revision of EU legislation on **Food Contact Materials** (FCMs). In a 2016 [implementation report](#), Parliament stressed the importance of developing EU guidelines for FCMs which would facilitate a harmonised and uniform implementation and better enforcement in the Member States. Members acknowledged that the [Framework Regulation \(EC\) No 1935/2004](#) constitutes a solid legal basis, but they considered it necessary to adopt specific measures to overcome shortcomings that exist in the implementation and enforcement of the legislation in place. Parliament amended this Regulation to include specific provisions ensuring traceability of objects which remain in contact with food, notably to allow a more effective response if product withdrawal is necessary. This is one of the aims of proper labelling: all materials and articles intended to be in contact with food must be labelled "suitable for food contact" or carry a special food contact symbol. In the implementation report, Parliament was of the opinion that:

- the major focus should be on the adoption of specific measures for those 13 materials not yet regulated at EU level, prioritising measures for paper and board, varnishes and coatings, metals and alloys, printing inks and adhesives;
- the adoption of further specific measures at EU level would encourage business operators to develop safe reusable and recycled FCMs, thereby contributing to the EU's efforts to establish a more effective circular economy;
- the Commission should increase the level of funding for EFSA because of the important role it plays in the risk assessment;
- further scientific research into non-intentionally added substances (NIAS) is necessary;
- the concept of vulnerable groups should be extended to include pregnant and breastfeeding women;
- EFSA's risk assessment procedure should take into account the 'cocktail effect', the effect of multiple concurrent and cumulative exposures from FCMs and other sources, which can cause adverse effects even if levels of the individual substances in the mixture are low;
- the Commission should consider identifying Bisphenol A as one of the substances classified as a substance of very high concern; and
- the Commission should establish mandatory labelling of the composition of FCMs and its intended presence of nanomaterials.

In 2020, Parliament adopted a [Resolution on the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability](#), in which it called for coherence and synergies between chemicals legislation and, inter alia, legislation on FCMs. The latter should be revised in line with the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) Regulation and the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures (CLP) Regulation. Legislative proposals should insert specific provisions on endocrine disruptors (EDCs) in order to treat them as carcinogenic, mutagenic and reprotoxic substances, and legislation on FCMs should be revised to substitute EDCs.

EU marketing standards for agricultural, fishery and aquaculture products

In the F2F strategy, the Commission also intends to revise **EU marketing standards** for agricultural, fishery and aquaculture products to ensure the uptake and supply of sustainable products. In the [Single CMO Regulation](#) and a later amendment to the regulation, Parliament specified that the common organisation of the markets (CMO) in agricultural products shall contribute to the improvement of economic conditions for the production and marketing of agricultural products. Marketing standards should be divided between obligatory rules for specific sectors or products and optional reserved terms to be established on a sectoral or product basis. The standards should take into account, inter alia, the natural and essential characteristics of the products concerned and the possible risk for consumers being misled due to expectations and perceptions. Standards also include definitions, designations and sales descriptions.

In 2014, Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the proposal for a regulation on the definition, description, presentation, labelling and the protection of geographical indications of aromatised wine products. Members amended the proposal to clarify the definition of geographical indications. These indications should be used when a given quality, reputation or other characteristic of the aromatised wine product is essentially attributable to its geographical origin. Members also decided that if the provenance of a product is given, it should also refer to the provenance of the grapes, in order not to mislead consumers. A [resolution](#) on the proposal for a similar regulation of spirit drinks followed in 2019. Parliament amended the proposed regulation such that the indication of the origin of a spirit drink shall correspond to the place or region where the stage in the production process which conferred on the spirit drink its character and essential qualities took place. Furthermore, Members suggested that the protection of geographical indications should also apply to goods in transit through the Union Customs territory, in order to strengthen protection and combat counterfeiting more effectively.

Food fraud

Finally, the Commission proposes action to enhance coordination in order to enforce single market rules and **tackle Food Fraud**, including by considering a reinforced use of OLAF's investigative capacities. In the wake of the horse meat scandal, Parliament adopted a [report](#) on the food crisis, fraud in the food chain and the control thereof. It found that current legislation is still fragile and not always reliable, and that therefore there is a need for improvements on the ground. The resolution noted that EU law does not currently provide a definition of food fraud and that Member States adopt different methodologies in the definition thereof. Members stressed the need to swiftly adopt a harmonised definition at EU level. Furthermore, Members were of the opinion that:

- better traceability of ingredients and products within the whole food chain would help to combat fraud. Greater attention should be paid to controls on imported goods from third countries and their compliance with EU standards on food and feed safety;
- the decision to set up a food fraud team is welcome. Parliament encouraged the Commission to consider the development of an EU Reference Laboratory for food authenticity;
- unannounced independent inspections are essential to ensure effective implementation of food safety and labelling standards. The Commission is called upon to enlarge the focus of the Food and Veterinary Office audits to include food fraud and the budgetary authority is urged to increase the capacity and resources of the FVO and of the Commission's food fraud team;
- the Commission should follow up with legislative proposals making the indication of the origin of meat in processed foods mandatory;
- there is also a need for the introduction of electronic certification systems in the food chain, which could reduce the likelihood of fraud based on paper certificates;
- a legal obligation on food business operators to report to competent authorities about the incidence of food fraud cases should be considered;

- the Member States should set penalties for food fraud which are at least double the estimated amount of the economic advance sought through the fraudulent activity; and
- the Commission should obtain an overview of the different national systems of sanctions for food fraud offences and of the functioning of these sanction regimes based on EU legislation.

On official controls, Parliament strengthened the independence of the delegating authority in relation to operators in the [Official Controls Regulation](#). Members also stipulated that:

- competent authorities should be responsible not just for organising official controls but also for carrying them out;
- official controls shall be performed regularly, taking account of the use of products, processes, materials, feed additives or substances that may influence food safety and wholesomeness, feed safety, animal health or animal welfare, as well as the potential for consumers to be misled as to the nature, quality or substance of a product and/or the potential for consumers to incur financial loss as a result of receiving misleading information from the operator;
- the Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts in order to establish a uniform minimum frequency for carrying out the controls; and
- the Commission should, through implementing acts, establish European reference centres for the authenticity and integrity of the agri-food chain.

Promote sustainable food consumption, facilitating the shift towards healthy, sustainable diets

The F2F strategy's actions connected to sustainable food consumption focus mostly on information, with actions including a proposal for a harmonised **mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labelling** to enable consumers to make health conscious food choices, a proposal to require **origin indication** for certain products, a proposal for a **sustainable food labelling framework** to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices, and a review of the **EU promotion programme** for agricultural and food products with a view to enhancing its contribution to sustainable production and consumption.



Previous legislation relevant to these actions include Regulations on [nutrition and health claims made on food](#), on [food information to consumers](#), on [the EU Ecolabel](#) and on [information provision and promotion measures concerning agricultural products](#), as well as Resolutions on [country of origin labelling for meat in processed food](#) and on [mandatory indication of the country of origin or place of provenance for certain foods](#). In these texts, Parliament agreed that information provision and promotion measures should increase consumers' awareness. It furthermore established that:

- a register of health claims authorised so far is to be compiled;
- it is appropriate to retain the requirement that the mandatory nutrition declaration should refer to 100g/100ml amounts; however, where food is pre-packed and individual portions or consumption units are identified, additionally a nutrition declaration per portion or consumption unit should be allowed;
- food information shall not be misleading, particularly by suggesting special characteristics that are common for similar foods or by suggesting the presence of an ingredient that has been substituted with a different ingredient;
- mandatory food information shall be easily visible and clearly legible. The Commission may establish, by means of delegated acts, the criteria subject to which one or more particulars may be expressed by pictograms and symbols instead of words and numbers;

- the name of an ingredient causing allergies shall be emphasised through a typeset that clearly distinguishes it from the rest of the list of ingredients;
- in cases where foods require special storage conditions and/or conditions for use, those conditions shall be indicated;
- the indication of the country of origin or place of provenance is mandatory for meat of swine, sheep, goats, and poultry fresh, chilled or frozen;
- the Commission should implement the mandatory indication of country of origin or place of provenance for all kinds of drinking milk, dairy products and meat products including meat in processed foods. It should consider extending the mandatory indication of country of origin to egg products and other single-ingredient foods or those with one main ingredient;
- the Commission should support labelling schemes relating to animal welfare during cultivation, transport and slaughter;
- Member States and the Commission shall agree on a specific action plan to promote the use of the Community Ecolabel;
- the Ecolabel criteria shall consider the substitution of hazardous substances by safer substances, the potential to reduce environmental impacts due to durability and reusability, and social and ethical aspects. As far as possible, the goal of reducing animal testing shall be considered and care shall be taken not to introduce measures whose implementation may impose disproportionate administrative and economic burdens on SMEs; and
- information provision and promotion measures must not be brand-oriented or be origin-oriented. However, the range of beneficiaries is widened to include producer organisations, groups and bodies of the agrifood sector whose objective and activity is to provide information on and promote agricultural products.

The F2F strategy includes further actions to determine the best modalities for setting **minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement** to promote healthy and sustainable diets, including organic products, in schools and public institutions, and a review of the **EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme** legal framework with a view to refocus the scheme on healthy and sustainable food. Parliament has previously underlined the importance of the continuation and strengthening of the two school schemes. Parliament stressed the fact that the Union aid should finance the supply to children in educational establishments of selected agricultural products and should do more to promote healthy eating habits and the consumption of local products. It excluded products containing added sugars, added salt or added fat from distribution under the school scheme. A new report on EU green public procurement criteria is in the preparatory phase. Earlier, in the [Directive on public procurement](#), Parliament already agreed that criteria for determining the most economically advantageous tender in public procurement may include environmental and/or social aspects. In order to ensure efficient and socially sustainable public procurement, Member States and contracting authorities may adopt the measures necessary to ensure compliance with obligations in the fields of environmental, social and labour law. The [Single CMO Regulation](#) and the [Resolution regarding the aid scheme for the supply of fruit and vegetables](#) also allow accompanying educational measures about healthy eating habits, local food chains, organic farming, sustainable production and combating food waste as well as reconnecting children with agriculture through activities. Finally, in the [CAP CMO report adopted in the AGRI Committee in 2019](#), Parliament inserted the provision that the aid under the school scheme allocated for the distribution of products should, when possible, promote short supply chain products.

Reduce food loss and waste

The final area of action in the F2F strategy is **tackling food loss and waste**. The Commission is committed to halving per capita food waste at retail and consumer levels by 2030. Specific measures set out in the

action plan to achieve this goal are setting a baseline and proposing legally binding **EU-level targets for food waste reduction**, and a revision of EU rules on **date marking** ('use by' and 'best before' dates).

In a 2017 [resolution](#) and in the [revision of the Waste Directive in 2018](#), Parliament already took on positions regarding targets for reducing food waste. It also shared its opinion on food information to consumers in the negotiations with the Council for a [2011 Regulation](#). Parliament recalled estimates that 1.3 billion tonnes of food is lost or wasted every year and that 795 million people worldwide do not have enough food to live a healthy and active life. In this regard, Parliament stressed the urgent need to reduce the amount of food waste, and to improve resource efficiency in the EU at every step of the food chain, crucial for the transition to a circular economy and for guaranteeing the Union's long-term competitiveness. It called on the Member States to take the measures required to achieve a Union food waste reduction target of 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 compared to the 2014 baseline, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Members called on the Commission to:

- identify EU legislation that might hamper the effective combating of food waste and assess the potential impact of new legislative proposals on food waste;
- examine, by 31 December 2020, the possibility of setting up binding EU-wide food waste reduction targets to be met by 2025 and 2030;
- support a legally binding definition of food waste and to adopt a common methodology, including minimum quality requirements, for the uniform measurement of food waste levels;
- implement targets for municipal waste recycling of at least 55% by 2025, 60% by 2030 and 65% by 2035;
- adopt implementing acts in relation to, inter alia, the manner of indicating the date of minimum durability of a food (or in the case of highly perishable foods, the 'use by' date), which may be expressed by pictograms and symbols instead of words and numbers;
- update the list of foods currently exempt from 'best before' labelling in order to prevent food waste; and
- organise a regular exchange of information and sharing of best practices among Member States, including, where appropriate, with regional and local authorities, on the practical implementation and enforcement of the requirements of the Waste Directive.

Other suggestions include providing economic incentives to support the collection of unused food, a change in the VAT Directive that would explicitly authorise tax exemptions on food donations, and variable pricing linked to expiry dates. Energy needs should be met by using waste and by-products that are not useful in any other process higher up the waste hierarchy and successfully combating food waste also requires strong recycling levels in the revised Waste Framework Directive and the integration of the cascading principle for biomass in EU energy policy.

Parliament also called on Member States themselves to take measures to reduce losses along the whole food supply chain, to adopt specific food waste prevention measures, to encourage home composting and separating bio-waste, to use the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development to reduce food waste in primary production and the processing sector, and to use the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived to facilitate food donations by financing the costs of collection, transport, storage and distribution.

Disclaimer and copyright. The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament. Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the European Parliament is given prior notice and sent a copy. © European Union, 2020.

© Images used under licence from Adobe Stock.

IP/A/ENVI/2020-12; Manuscript completed: October 2020; Date of publication: November 2020

Administrator responsible: Christian KURRER; Editorial assistant: Catherine NAAS

Contact: Poldep-Economy-Science@ep.europa.eu

This document includes hyperlinks that are only accessible via its electronic version, available on the internet at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses> or via the QR code displayed on the first page.