

Retail and wholesale fully committed to sustainable food – but need flexibility for finding best solutions

EuroCommerce Director General Christel Delberghe today welcomed the launch of a public consultation on the EU framework for sustainable food systems. She commented:

“The retail and wholesale sector is fully committed to working with other stakeholders in the supply chain to build sustainable food systems in Europe. We have taken a proactive role in the Farm-to-Fork Code of Conduct and [our dedicated website](#) shows the many initiatives by our members to encourage healthy and sustainable food choices. Our main ask of the Commission is to ensure that any regulation emerging from this exercise allows flexibility for innovative ideas with well-defined sustainability criteria.”

Retail and wholesale have responded to consumer demand for more sustainable and healthy food options. EuroCommerce’s latest [report with McKinsey on the grocery retail market](#) shows continued consumer interest in buying more of these products. But it also highlights a growing polarisation of the ability to buy sustainable and healthy foods between better-off and less affluent households, widened further by present inflationary pressures on the cost of living. EuroCommerce will therefore be asking the Commission to:

- Propose rules which work with the grain of existing multiple voluntary sector initiatives and add value to these.
- Ensure a strong single market and an enabling policy environment which supports companies in their ability to do business and differentiate themselves from their competitors, as a basic condition for an innovative market.
- Be coherent with existing EU legislation and approaches such as in the General Food Law, in defining responsibility and reporting requirements and ensure that responsibility falls on the operators best placed to fulfil those obligations.
- To keep food safety and a science-based approach at the heart of the sustainable food system and ensure that rules and definitions covering sustainability and any claims related to it are clear and easily applicable by operators, as well as understood by consumers. Any rules on sustainability labelling should be applied voluntarily.
- Involve retail and wholesale and the rest of the supply chain when drawing up rules to ensure that they are practicable and can therefore achieve their objectives.

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 27 countries and 5 million companies, including leading global players and many small businesses. Over a billion times a day, retailers and wholesalers distribute goods and provide an essential service to millions of business and individual customers. The sector generates 1 in 7 jobs, offering a varied career to 26 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.