



Brussels, 15 January 2015

Dear President Jean-Claude Juncker,

Dear First Vice-President Frans Timmermans,

Dear Commissioners, Vytenis Andriukaitis, Phil Hogan and Karmenu Vella

We would like to welcome you to your new roles in the European Commission and we look forward to the next five years of productive collaboration between the Parliament and Commission. We are pleased that sustainable development has been included in the First Vice-President's portfolio, as a principle enshrined in the EU Treaties (Article 3 TEU), and your recognition of its importance to EU citizens.

With this in mind, we are writing to you to request the publication of the Communication entitled "Building a Sustainable European Food System". Food is one of our most basic and important needs and an imperative determinant of human health, and it is paramount that there is a sustainable food strategy in place to safeguard access to food, and to protect the environment and health of EU citizens. The Barroso Commission produced significant ground-work outlining strategy towards a greener, more sustainable Europe in both the Seventh Environment Action Programme (7EAP), and the Communication towards a Circular Economy: a zero waste programme for Europe, which was adopted by the College in July. The Communication on a Sustainable European Food System was agreed by three Commissioners (DG SANCO, DG ENVI and DG AGRI) and translated into the 24 official EU languages, and is ready to be adopted.

The 2011 European Commission's Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR) report cites that world population is estimated to increase to 9.2 billion people in 2050 and it is essential that food systems are in place to support demand in a sustainable manner. Not only does the present system produce huge quantities of waste, it is also a massive strain on resources, and consumption is leading to mass health problems^{1,2} and rising costs for public health services.

As part of the Circular Economy package, the Commission has adopted an aspirational target to reduce food waste by 30 percent by 2025, which we hope will pre-empt mandatory targets to combat the huge quantity of food which is

wasted in the European Union. Indeed, food waste is an issue of the great importance, but is also a symptom of a broken food system, and this entire system needs to be addressed holistically.

An overwhelming body of scientific evidence points to the damage done to, not only to our environment, but also the health of EU citizens, by present intensive farming systems and pesticide use.^{3,4,5,6,7} This makes it necessary to provide the public with accurate and accessible information on what constitutes a healthy sustainable diet, that relies on production methods which are respectful of biodiversity, a reduction in consumption of animal-based foods, lower intakes of fat and sugar, as well as high animal welfare standards.

Europe is a global leader on green initiatives and has set many benchmarks for the rest of the world to follow. A number of Member States have already produced guidelines on a sustainable diet, but this is by no means trans-European and therefore recommendations are necessary at an EU level to achieve increased public awareness of food sustainability across the European Union. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, which is currently in the process of reviewing scientific evidence and public comments for the 2015 Dietary Guidelines, is taking sustainability concerns into account for the first time. At latest International Congress on Nutrition (ICN2), from 19-21 November, world leaders committed⁸ to enhance sustainable food systems by developing coherent public policies from production to consumption, in order to meet people's nutrition's need and allow for diversified healthy diet. It is crucial that Europe retains its place as one of the most progressive regions on green policies, which are key for innovation and green growth.

The relationship between food and climate change is widely known. Climate change is now internationally recognised by the scientific community as a consequence of human behaviour and the Intergovernmental Panel and Climate Change (IPCC) has recently issued its starkest warning yet that action must be taken to mitigate rising temperatures and keep within the United Nations 2C limit.⁹ The food sector is one of the biggest contributors to greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. With emissions higher than ever, it is important that the European Commission again takes a lead by publishing this important document, which is the first step towards a truly sustainable food system in the European Union.

Further, this is what European citizens want. An overwhelming majority of European citizens, 95 percent, recently said in a Eurobarometer poll that protecting the environment was personally important to them; over half of Europeans think the EU is not doing enough to protect the environment; and almost one quarter are particularly concerned by our consumption habits.¹⁰ You have a Communication at your disposal which would positively appeal to this 95 percent of EU citizens.

We will face many challenges over the next five years and the publication of this Communication will be considered by MEPs and European citizens alike as a positive step in the right direction for EU food security.

Yours sincerely,

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cc: Secretary-General Catherine Day

¹ Freibauer A et al. 2011. Sustainable food consumption and production in a resource-constrained world. European Commission – Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR)
http://ec.europa.eu/research/agriculture/scar/pdf/scar_feg3_final_report_01_02_2011.pdf

² Statement by the World Health Organization. 2013. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health <http://www.who.int/nmh/events/2014/who-statement.pdf>

³ UNEP (2010) Assessing the Environmental Impacts of Consumption and Production: Priority Products and Materials, A Report of the Working Group on the Environmental Impacts of Products and Materials to the International Panel for Sustainable Resource Management. Hertwich, E., van der Voet, E., Suh, S., Tukker, A, Huijbregts M., Kazmierczyk, P., Lenzen, M., McNeely, J., Moriguchi, Y.

http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/portals/24102/PDFs/PriorityProductsAndMaterials_Summary_EN.pdf

⁴ Steinfeld H, Gerber P, Wassenaar T, Castel V, Rosales M, and de Haan C. 2006. Livestock's long shadow: environmental issues and options. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

<ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/010/a0701e/a0701e.pdf>

⁵ von Lengerke T and Krauth C. 2011. Economic costs of adult obesity: a review of recent European studies with a focus on subgroup-specific costs. <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/21592692>

⁶ Bajzelj B et al. 2014. Importance of food-demand management for climate mitigation. Nature Climate Change.

<http://www.nature.com/nclimate/journal/v4/n10/full/nclimate2353.html>

⁷ Tilman D & Clark M. 2014. Global diets link environmental sustainability and human health. Nature Climate Change.

<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/vaop/ncurrent/full/nature13959.html>

⁸ Second International Conference on Nutrition. 2014. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

<http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf>

⁹ Barros, V.R., C.B. Field et al. IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability. Part A: Global and Sectoral Aspects. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. <http://ipcc-wg2.gov/AR5/report/full-report/>

¹⁰ Special Eurobarometer 416. Attitudes of European Citizens towards the Environment

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_416_en.pdf