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Report Name: Europe's Beating Cancer Plan Aims to Reduce Harmful Alcohol Consumption and Improve Access to Healthy Diets

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Prepared By: Sophie Bolla

Approved By: Lisa Allen

Report Highlights:

On February 3, 2021, the European Commission published its Europe's Beating Cancer Plan. Part of the plan includes actions to be taken by the EU and its Member States to increase cancer prevention across the Union. This includes reducing harmful alcohol consumption, improving access to healthy diets, a review of the EU promotion programs for agricultural products, a study on tax measures on sugars and soft drinks and the reduction of exposure to hazardous substances. Depending on how the recommendations are implemented, the new measures may affect U.S. exports of agricultural and food products.

General Information:

On February 3, 2021, the European Commission published its [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#), which is the second flagship initiative of the von der Leyen Commission after the EU Green Deal. Europe accounts for a tenth of the world's population, but a quarter of the world's cancers. In 2020, 2.7 million people in the European Union were diagnosed with the disease, and another 1.3 million people lost their lives to it. The Cancer Plan aims to set out a new EU approach to cancer prevention, treatment and care and will focus on actions where the EU can add the most value.

Reacting to the publication of the Plan, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said: "In 2020, while we were all fighting against the COVID-19 pandemic, many of us were fighting a silent battle. The battle against cancer. In 2020, we lost 1.3 million Europeans to this disease. And sadly, the number of cases is on the rise. This is why we present Europe's Beating Cancer Plan today. The fight of those battling cancer is our fight as well, in Europe."

The Cancer Plan is structured around four action areas:

- Prevention
- Early detection
- Diagnosis and treatment
- Improvement of the quality of life of cancer patients and survivors,

Cancer Prevention through the reduction of cancer risks

According to the Beating Cancer Plan, about 40 percent of cancer cases in the EU are preventable. To address this, the Cancer Plan aims to raise awareness of and address key risk factors, such as cancers caused by harmful alcohol consumption, obesity and lack of physical activity, exposure to pollution, carcinogenic substances and radiation, as well as cancers triggered by infectious agents.

Please find below the action items that touch on food and agriculture that the Commission has identified in the Beating Cancer Plan to improve cancer prevention. Depending of their implementation, some of these action items could impact U.S. exports of agricultural and food products.

1. Reducing harmful alcohol consumption

The Commission announced several action items to reduce the harmful consumption of alcohol in the EU:

- The Commission will increase support for Member States and stakeholders to implement best practices and capacity-building activities to reduce harmful alcohol consumption in line with the targets of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This includes a target to achieve a relative reduction of at least 10 percent in the harmful use of alcohol by 2025.

- The Commission will also review EU legislation on the taxation of alcohol.
- The Commission will review its promotion policy on alcoholic beverages.
- The Commission will propose a mandatory indication of the list of ingredients and the nutrition declaration on alcoholic beverage labels before the end of 2022 and of health warnings on labels before the end 2023. Currently, alcoholic beverages are excluded from the requirements of the [Food Information to Consumer Regulation](#) on nutrition declaration¹.

2. Improving health promotion through access to healthy diets

In its Plan, the Commission notes that cancer risk is heightened by the joint effects of unhealthy diets and physical inactivity. To address this issue, the Commission identified several action items to improve health promotion in the EU through access to healthy diets:

- The Commission will reduce the presence of carcinogenic contaminants in food and will set maximum levels for more of these contaminants, based on the latest available scientific evidence.
- As announced in the [Farm to Fork Strategy](#)², the Commission will also propose a revision of the EU school fruit, vegetables and milk scheme in 2023 to make healthy products more available to children and improve their understanding of the benefits of healthy food.
- As announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy as well, the Commission will propose harmonized, mandatory front-of-pack nutrition labeling.
- The Commission will review the EU promotion policy for agricultural products, with a view to enhancing its contribution to sustainable production and consumption, and in line with the shift to a more plant-based diet, with less red and processed meat and other foods linked to cancer risks and more fruit and vegetables. This was already announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy.
- On taxation, in 2022, the Commission will publish a study mapping fiscal measures and pricing policies on sugars, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. Following this, the Commission will look into the feasibility of proposing new tax measures on sugars and soft drinks.

3. Reducing exposure to hazardous substances

In the Beating Cancer Plan, the Commission highlights that it is particularly important to improve safety of products for consumers and professional users and reduce the exposure to carcinogen. Therefore, the Commission announced several actions to reduce exposure to hazardous substances including:

¹ For more information on the current rules for nutrition labeling for alcoholic beverages in the EU, please see GAIN Report: [‘EU Alcohol Industry Labeling Proposal - Labeling Apart Together’](#) and [EU 2020 FAIRS Report](#).

² For more information about the Farm to Fork Strategy, please see GAIN Report: [‘Green Deal Strategies for the EU Agri-Food Sector Present a Politically Ambitious Policy Roadmap’](#)

- Work through the [Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability](#) to deal with hazardous chemicals more rapidly, and effectively reduce the exposure of consumers and professionals to carcinogenic substances, or to other hazardous chemicals that interfere with the endocrine and immune systems, including plant protection products.

More information:

- [European Commission's website](#)
- [Questions and Answers on the Beating Cancer Plan](#)

Attachments:

No Attachments.