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Report Name: European Commission Publishes Roadmap on a Future Regulation to Integrate Sustainability Into All Food-Related Policies

Country: European Union

Post: Brussels USEU

Report Category: Policy and Program Announcements, Climate Change/Global Warming/Food Security, FAIRS Subject Report

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Report Highlights:

On September 28, 2021, the European Commission published a roadmap outlining a new regulation being developed to increase the sustainability of all foods placed on the EU market. The upcoming regulation is part of the Farm to Fork Strategy and is likely to establish rules on "sustainability" labeling of food products and minimum criteria for sustainable public food procurement for schools or public institutions. The future regulation also aims to create an enabling environment for future policy and legislation by raising the political and legal profile of sustainability, including climate neutrality concepts, in the food system. Stakeholders can comment on the roadmap until October 26, 2021.

General Information:

As part of the Farm to Fork Strategy[1], the European Commission announced that it would publish a legislative proposal before the end of 2023 to enhance the sustainability of the EU food system. The goal is to accelerate the transition towards a more sustainable food system and to increase the sustainability of all foods placed on the EU market. For the Commission, such a proposal is necessary to ensure policy coherence between the EU and Member States, incorporate sustainability into all food-related policies, and strengthen the resilience of food systems. A precise definition of "sustainability" is not included within the current roadmap, but the final legislation could include aspects related to healthy diets in addition to the more commonly used notion of environmental sustainability.

On September 28, 2021, the European Commission published a roadmap outlining its intention to propose a regulation to increase the sustainability of all foods placed on the EU market. Within this roadmap, the Commission announced that it will prepare an impact assessment in 2022-2023. As part of the impact assessment, the Commission will launch a 12-week public consultation period during the first quarter of 2022. A legislative proposal is expected in the fourth quarter of 2023.

The impact assessment will evaluate the potential economic, social, and environmental impacts of the different policy options described in the roadmap:

1. **Option 1:** Baseline scenario with no new EU level policy intervention;
2. **Option 2:** Voluntary approaches through soft law instruments;
3. **Option 3:** Reinforcing existing legislation;
4. **Option 4:** A new comprehensive framework legislation on the sustainability of the Union food system.

If chosen, option 4 listed in the roadmap would lead to the most significant changes in EU food law. Option 4 calls for new comprehensive framework legislation on the sustainability of the EU food system, which could serve as a general law applying to all actors within the food system. It would set out the "common basis," composed of general objectives, definitions, principles and requirements for ensuring that sustainability considerations (beyond the already applicable safety-based requirements) are taken into account when food is produced/placed on the Union market. This common basis would underlie an integrated general approach for more specialized laws when addressing specific sustainability considerations, including in the context of the sustainability assessment of regulated products, such as food additives, throughout the food value chain. In that respect, a legal obligation for a progressive adaptation of the sectoral European food law could be considered. Furthermore, this new framework legislation could also include a combination of "push" provisions, laying down minimum requirements for food products and related operations and "pull" provisions setting incentives for entities in the food system to go beyond the minimum requirements.

As part of the impact assessment, the Commission will consider a list of indicative policy tools that could be part of the final proposal such as, *inter alia*:
- Sustainability principles and objectives;

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[1] For more information, please see GAIN Report: Green Deal Strategies for the EU Agri-Food Sector Present a Politically Ambitious Policy Roadmap.

- General minimum standards to be met for foods produced or placed on the Union market and related food operations;
- Horizontal elements for sustainability analysis in relation to regulated products in the food chain, complementing the existing 'risk analysis' principle;
- Legitimate and proportionate requirements on sustainability for imports of food, in compliance with EU international commitments, particularly in the WTO;
- Provision of information on the sustainable performance of the food (sustainable labelling), while ensuring consistency with other relevant EU labels (e.g. organic) and taking into account other relevant ongoing Union initiatives;
- Minimum mandatory criteria for sustainable food procurement in schools and public institutions;

Feedback Period:

On September 28, 2021, the European Commission launched a consultative feedback period on the roadmap. Feedback will be taken into account while the Commission is finalizing this initiative. U.S. stakeholders who would like to comment can do so via the following link: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13174-Sustainable-EU-food-system-new-initiative_en

The deadline for input is 12:00 a.m. (Central European Summer Time or Universal Time Coordinated + 01:00) on October 26, 2021. Please note that all comments made within the consultative framework may become public.

Attachments:

No Attachments.