Report Name: Launch of EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices

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Report Highlights:

On July 5, 2021, the European Commission and agri-food industry stakeholders launched the European Union's Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices as part of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F). The voluntary Code aims to push agri-food industry to accelerate their contribution to a sustainable transition.

General Information:

On July 5, 2021, the European Commission and agri-food industry stakeholders launched the European Union's Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices as part of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy (F2F). The Code is presented by the Commission as an essential part of the EU's efforts to increase the availability and affordability of healthy and sustainable food options that help reduce the EU's overall environmental footprint.

The Code was developed over six months with EU trade associations, agri-food companies, non-governmental organizations, and trade unions together with the European Commission services. The voluntary Code and its subsequent commitments are not legally binding and do not create any contractual obligations. While the Code is not legally binding, associations and companies that sign the text commit to accelerate their contribution to a sustainable transition through the seven aspirational objectives set out in the Code which are each accompanied by targets and action items as follows:

Objectives	Targets	Action Items (non-exhaustive)
Healthy, balanced, and sustainable diets for all European consumers	Reversing malnutrition and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) in the EU Reducing the environmental footprint of food consumption by 2030	o Encourage increased consumption of fruits and vegetables, wholegrain cereals, fiber, nuts and pulses, including locally produced varieties o Provide transparent, voluntary product information to consumers
Prevention and reduction of food loss and waste (at consumer level, within internal operations, and across value chains)	A 50% reduction of per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030 and reduced food losses along the food production and supply chains in the EU	o Supporting improved food management at household level o Minimizing waste and reducing losses in operations and across value chains
A climate neutral food chain in Europe by 2050	Reducing net emissions from own operations, contributing to a 55% GHG emission reduction target in the EU food chain by 2030 (following a science-based approach)	o Increase the use of renewable energy sources (e.g. solar, wind, sustainable biomass, co-products) o Improve the efficiency of logistics
An optimized circular and resource-efficient food chain in Europe	Improved resource-efficiency within own operations, contributing to sustainable, efficient use and management of energy and natural resources in operation by 2030	o Consider the use of environmental footprint or other Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) methodologies for products and/or companies to measure impacts o Identify, develop and/or foster the uptake of more sustainable packaging

	Improved sustainability of food and drink packaging, striving for all packaging towards circularity by 2030	solutions
		o Greater recyclability of food packaging
		o Increased content of recycled and/or renewable materials in food packaging
Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all	Improved resilience and competitiveness of companies operating at any point along the food value chain by 2030 Quality jobs, skilled workforce and safe and inclusive workplaces for all	o Engage in research and innovation programs on food sustainability o Support training, upskilling and/or reskilling of workers
Sustainable value creation in the European food supply chain through partnership	Improved resilience and competitiveness of companies operating at any point along the food value chain by 2030 Continued progress towards sustainable production, contributing to sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources by 2030 and improved animal welfare	o Strengthen supply chain relations and create shared value with partners/suppliers across the chain by identifying synergies and opportunities for collaboration o Promote and support innovation and/or increased use of sustainable agricultural, aquaculture and fisheries practices in partnership with farmers/fishers o Support sustainable use of pesticides and fertilizers whilst contributing to maintaining food security and resilience
Sustainable sourcing in food supply chains	Transformed commodity supply chains which do not contribute to deforestation, forest degradation and destruction of natural habitat and which preserve and protect high value ecosystems and biodiversity Improved social performance in (global) food supply chains	o Promote sustainable sourcing of materials with suppliers, inside or outside of the EU o Encourage the uptake of scientifically-robust sustainability certification schemes for food (incl. fish and fishery products) o Deforestation-/conversion-free food supply chains

On July 5, a total of 65 entities - 26 food manufacturers, 14 food retailers, 1 from the food service sector, 24 associations - including Nestle, Mondelez, Carrefour and FoodDrinkEurope - signed the Code of Conduct. An overview of all the signatories can be found here. Some companies such as PepsiCo and Coca-Cola have already come out with their own voluntary pledges, promising to remove added sugar from their drinks, and said the Code of Conduct has hurried them along in making those commitments.

Large companies will provide an annual report on the progress of their commitments. The annual report will be submitted before the end of April each year. Some flexibility in terms of monitoring and reporting is foreseen for SMEs: those which are not able to report annually could provide simplified reports once every two or three years on their commitments and data corresponding to their activities.

Reacting to the launch of the Code, Stella Kyriakides, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: "Today we are marking one of the first deliverables in our work under the Farm to Fork Strategy towards a healthy and environmentally-friendly food system. […]. The EU Code of Conduct will facilitate this cooperation, building on the commitments the food industry has already made and encouraging more ambitious action. The European food industry is already known for the quality and safety of its products. It should now also become the golden standard for sustainability." Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton added that "The Commission is committed to mobilizing its support instruments, in particular for SMEs, the backbone of the agri-food ecosystem, as we are embarking on this ambitious journey."

After the launch of the Code, some non-governmental organizations pointed out that regulatory changes might be needed if this voluntary Code does not bring about any positive changes. For example, Milka Sokolovic, Director General of the NGO European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) noted that "in order to enable an effective and equitable transition towards sustainable and healthy food systems, regulatory measures that set common rules for all should be the main drivers of change. Voluntary initiatives like the Code of Conduct can certainly be helpful, but they must not be relied upon as the sole or main drivers of change, as an alternative to binding measures."

Attachments:

No Attachments.