



COLDIRETTI



Mr. Margaritis Schinas
Vice President
European Commission
1049 Brussels
Belgium

Prot. 24 /P

Roma, 04/02/2021

Subject: Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

Dear Vice President Margaritis Schinas,

The new Europe's Beating Cancer Plan, recently adopted by the European Commission, represents an important step towards better coordination and strengthening of prevention, diagnosis, treatment and assistance activities. The nutritional aspect certainly represents one of the cornerstones of prevention, since a healthy and varied diet, associated with a healthy and non-sedentary lifestyle, together with conscious and informed consumption patterns, are the basis of the general well-being of mankind and help to prevent numerous medical complications, including the risk of developing diseases such as cancer.

As the main Italian and European farmers' organisation, Coldiretti has always recognized in its action the need to safeguard the health of citizens as an absolute priority and has always been committed to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, through nutrition and food.

As you might be aware of, in the days before the adoption of the Plan we have been vocal because the information we had raised big concerns about the economic impact that some of the proposed measures could have had on the European agro-food sector. Therefore we have been in touch with some of your colleagues in the College to share our concerns.

Finally, we were relieved to listen to your reassurances in particular about the intention of the European Commission not to penalize the EU wine sector with health warnings and we recognized the important improvements on the final wording of the Communication as far as EU promotion policy is concerned.



The European way of life - that is at the core of your mandate - is very much linked with the necessity to recognize and defend the European way of producing, consuming and behaving. We cannot help but noticing some concerning aspects linked to some trivializations and generalizations relating to the complexity of agricultural production and dietary choices.

For all these reasons we would be glad to have the opportunity to discuss the matter further with you and to bring our reflections to your attention, also in the context of the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Thankful and certain of the attention you will give to these observations, kindly find here below some specific elements that explain more in detail our views.

I hope we could have the opportunity to meet soon to discuss more in depth our point of view on future EU policies for the agri-food sector.

Kind regards,



SPECIFIC ELEMENTS

The inclusion of wine in the broader category of spirits, red and processed meat among the foods associated with the increased risk of cancer and the motion of their consequent exclusion from EU promotion programs for agricultural products, appear unjustified and not based on evident and reliable scientific assessments.

In the same way it appears unjustified and dangerous to equate, as for information to the consumer and labelling, the abuse of spirits with a moderate consumption of wine, recognized as positive for human health if consumed in the right quantities and in a balanced diet. Therefore it seems important to remove the reference to future proposals that aim at introducing health warning linked to wine consumption.

Agri-food excellences such as wine and agricultural beers, but also the wide variety of quality productions of our animal sector also recognized by the EU for the high added value, actually constitute a driving force for growth and employment but also for the protection of the territory and of the environment that would risk being enormously penalized by labelling systems demonizing some product or by the exclusion from such promotion programs. In particular, excluding these sectors would inevitably result in the possible extinction of small local productions that relies on this kind of support to be able to stay on the market.

If we consider wine, the EU promotion policy, instead of excluding such an important sector to promote the distinctiveness and tradition of the European and Italian agricultural model, should be considered fundamental in order to keep on supporting education in responsible, moderate and aware consumption of quality products with a lower alcohol content, also making the appropriate distinctions with alcohol abuse, in particular considering spirits.

As for meat, it is important to remember that the Italian Foundation for Cancer Research (AIRC) specifies that the classification of carcinogenicity of red meat does not represent a level of risk, rather simply a measure of the degree of confidence that experts have in the interpretation of the results. Therefore, as a consequence, it represents the measure of the degree of reliability of the epidemiological studies carried out, in particular those related to the cause-effect relationship. This specification is deemed necessary, since a misunderstanding inevitably leads to hasty and dangerous conclusions for the fate of key economic sectors that are investing more and more in sustainability. Furthermore, the AIRC scientists also state that "meat - including red and processed meat - is undoubtedly an important source of protein and it is important to remember that animal proteins are made up of the same molecules as vegetable ones: amino acids". It should also be emphasized that the possible increase in the risk of developing diseases depends mainly on the quantity and frequency of consumption of these foods. Therefore, it is necessary to underline once again the importance - even more in this specific context - of following the recommendations of the Guidelines for Healthy eating, assessing them while avoiding penalizing specific products, on the basis that each of us has specific health conditions and consequently different needs in nutritional terms.

Finally, it is necessary to stress that the promotion activities and messages conveyed thanks to the EU promotion programs for agri-food products, in particular for meat and meat products, are carefully controlled by the EU agency CHAFEA and are not aimed at increasing consumption, but rather at enhancing the value of the European livestock sector which bears distinctiveness elements in terms of animal welfare and sustainability compared to the livestock sectors of Third countries. It is precisely thanks to the tools that the promotion offers to the sector, that it will be possible to concentrate more and more efforts towards correct nutritional communication to consumers, aimed at providing not only more evidence on the increasing sustainability of the production process and the values of quality and distinctiveness of the EU livestock supply chain, but also to strengthen the promotion of consumer choices that are as aware and informed as possible.