Written questions to Ms Joanna Drake

Ensuring policy coherence within the Green Deal

While the EU’s 2050 climate neutrality objective is at the heart of the European Green Deal, many other EU objectives concerning health, circular economy and food waste are also aimed at. It is thus important to identify and minimise potential trade-offs, for instance between reducing packaging, ensuring food safety, supporting healthier diets, and tackling food waste.

Questions:
- How will the Commission ensure coherence between all EU political objectives in order to anticipate and minimise trade-offs?
- Will the Commission undertake an overarching scientific assessment of the actual impacts of the various Green Deal initiatives, as announced previously, and how can we contribute to it/support it?

Circularity of packaging

The Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive will soon be revised but the Single Use Plastics Directive (SUPD) has yet to be fully transposed across the EC Member States.

There is thus an urgent need for a clear legislative and regulatory framework in order to provide long term visibility and legal certainty for economic operators and to avoid dispersion of resources with scattered local initiatives.

Questions:
- How will the Commission ensure the creation of an EU level playing field for packaging and packaging waste, while ensuring coherence and consistency between the various ongoing and upcoming political developments?
- What can we expect from the revision of the Packaging and Packaging Waste Directive in terms of reduction of material use, reuse and refill?
- In particular, has the Commission already discussed the long term goals that it will aim to achieve, in particular in relation to the upcoming revision of the PPWD? The EC’s policy goals are clear in relation to recycling and reuse (e.g. 100% reuse or recyclable packaging by 2030), however the ultimate goals linked to packaging reduction (including overpackaging) and recycled content are less so.

Great efforts have been and are being made by the food and drink sector to meet the EU’s objectives to enhance packaging recycled content, including through voluntary actions such as the Circular Plastics Alliance. There is however an urgent need to foster waste collection, including through improving consumer sorting information and harmonising collection schemes across Member States. There is also a need for significant investment to be made at national and EU levels in waste management infrastructure and recycling technologies.

Questions:
- What is the Commission planning to do to address these challenges and achieve the EU circular economy objectives?
- Will the Commission encourage Member States to develop recycling infrastructures in terms of e.g. number, geographical coverage and quality?
- How can the Commission ensure alignment between the green recovery plan and the need for local investment in waste management infrastructure, and the EU’s circularity ambitions?
- How could DG ENV further support the work of the CPA to help deliver on the EU’s circularity objective and help ensure coherence between existing parallel initiatives including the European plastics pact?
- Can DG ENV help accelerate DG SANTE’s work on food grade authorisations to ensure that the offer for food-quality recycled plastic materials matches the growing demand by the food and drink industry?

There are many national developments related to waste, plastics and the circular economy (e.g. in France and Spain) which go beyond the scope of the SUPD and other EU waste-related legislation which risk posing barriers to free movement of goods in the EU.

Questions:
- Can the Commission ensure proper functioning of the Single Market in this context?
- Are there any actions already being taken in this direction?

Environmental information to consumers

The green claims initiative is expected to be launched this summer. Our sector supports the creation of an EU legislative framework for the voluntary provision of product environmental information based on mandatory conditions, including the use of PEF. However, the PEF methodology is complex and difficult to understand and apply, especially for SMEs. We therefore believe that the simplification of PEF is a precondition for making it mandatory for the substantiation of green claims.

Questions:
- How can PEF be improved / further developed to make it easier to use for all companies, including SMEs?
- Would it be possible to facilitate this process by focusing the simplification exercise on agri-food sectors, as the need for and importance of food security may require specific targeted support?

Several product environmental labelling schemes have been launched or are being developed at national levels. For instance, in France, Yuka has launched an app that allows to scan products to find out about their environmental impacts, while the national environmental agency ADEME is working on a national scheme that is expected to be launched by the end of the year. The growing number of environmental labels risks exacerbating existing consumer confusion and will not allow consumers to compare products if they so wish.

Questions:
- Considering that the new green claims legislation will not be in force before several years, how can the Commission avoid that these national initiatives pose a risk to the Single Market and jeopardise the successful development of an EU level playing field?
- To ensure a level playing field, how will the Commission ensure that the future requirement to substantiate green claims will apply to all entities that provide environmental information to consumers, including retailers, private applications and not for profit organisations?

As part of the Farm to Fork Strategy, the Commission intends to launch, in 2024, a sustainable food labelling framework to empower consumers to make sustainable food choices.

Questions:
- In your opinion, to what extent will the green claims initiative inform the future sustainable food labelling framework? How will environmental labelling fit with other existing / future food labelling schemes, e.g. on nutrition, animal welfare, country of origin and deforestation?
Sustainable food systems – Farm-to-fork strategy

Questions:

- What are DG ENV’s expectations regarding the F2F Code of Conduct in relation to environmental sustainability, in particular in terms of areas that should be addressed, aspirational commitments and actions?

Biodiversity

Questions:

- How will DG JUST proposals on sustainable corporate governance on human rights and on environmental duty of care and mandatory due diligence (expected Q2 of 2021) be taken into account in DG ENV’s expected proposal on deforestation and forest degradation?

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