

5th Sherpa meeting of the High Level Forum for a Better Functioning of the Food Supply Chain **(3 October)**

Today we attended the first part of the 5th High Level Forum for a Better Functioning of the Food Supply Chain. Commission representatives from GROW [REDACTED] and JUST [REDACTED] underscored that the Commission takes the issue very seriously and repeated president Juncker's message. [REDACTED] briefly highlighted JUST actions which encompass: (1) Commission notice adopted on 26 September to assist national enforcers (ppt by JUST), (2) funding the development of a harmonised testing methodology, (3) funding to assist MS conduct studies and develop enforcement capacities and (4) to engage into a multi-stakeholder dialogue (amongst others the purpose of this meeting);

The Commission representatives reiterated that the existing legislation – when efficiently implemented – is sufficient to tackle the issue of dual quality food and that it does not restrict food business operators' right to differentiate and adapt their products to meet legitimate goals such as consumer preferences, but that adequate information should be given to consumers in order to be fair and respect their expectations.

Representatives from MS and industry generally welcomed the Commission's actions so far, in particular, they...

- welcomed the guidance and announced they will scrutinize it carefully (CZ, SK, IE, UK, FoodDrinkEurope); most stakeholders called the existing legislation – when implemented effectively – sufficient (NL, UK, IE, SE); only HU and CZ (but mildly) called for further legislation;
- stressed the importance of working on facts and evidence and therefore welcomed the efforts by the JRC (EuroCommerce, FoodDrinkEurope, AT, NL, PL, PO);
- welcomed the idea of a multi-stakeholder network and signaled their general support (HU, FoodDrinkEurope, EuroCommerce, PO); BEUC explained they cannot participate because they do not have the necessary evidence but (if possible) participation would be interesting for some of its members;

Industry representatives further called for the Commission to take the position of a 'honest broker' in a truly multi-stakeholder exchange and refused to work on a 'code of conduct' because they considered this premature and wanted progress on tests first (FoodDrinkEurope, EuroCommerce).

DG GROW and Eurocommerce stressed that a part of the problem comes from Territorial suppliers' restrictions. [REDACTED] made a call to the industry to revisit their market segmentation policies which were not adequate anymore and reflecting the Internal Market of 20 years ago. [REDACTED] announced that further work will be done on such a thematic in the next Meeting of the Forum. [REDACTED] also concluded by asking all MS to be more engaged as the problem was political and economical, and that they should demonstrate respect for an issue judged highly relevant at the top political level in some MS and in the Commission.