



EC Register for Interest Representatives No 109356110578-03

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## CHANGE OF SEASON — TIMEFRAMES FOR FOOD POLICY TO CHANGE

Spring is in the air for food policy to take a new turn. 2019 will bring the European Union under a new political management that will make or break the shift towards sustainability in the food sector.

**Re: 2019 — A Year of Change**  
**2019-2020 — Presidency Trio Romania, Finland, Croatia**  
**2019-2024 — Sustainability shift of Europe's food law?**  
**Food 2030 — The future is plant-based**

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The next decade will be crucial for re-shaping Europe's food production, food chain, and food consumption. The onslaught of climate change will be felt, with pressures on the food system mounting from all sides mandating change. Whatever the answers are, a shift towards plant-based food will need to be part of the solution.
- In 2019, the 9<sup>th</sup> European Parliament and a newly appointed College of Commissioners will have to define policy objectives for food in Europe. Regardless if the EU, Member States, regions, municipalities, or indeed companies and individuals are asked to do so, it is imperative that they move toward more plant-based diets. Furthermore, 2019 will see intense debates over the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). A shift away from intensive animal agriculture towards more sustainable food production must be an essential component in order to combat environmental, climate, animal-welfare, and public-health concerns.
- The Trio of Council presidencies of Romania, Finland, and Croatia have resolved to focus on food security. Clearly, not only security of supply, but also challenges arising from environmental, climate, and animal-welfare concerns, mandate a shift away from meat and dairy and towards plant-based food. Food innovation and investment therein must give preference to plant-based products.
- In the coming EU's political season of 2019-2024, decision makers must not be allowed to retreat from responsibility for reshaping the food system. The regulatory issues that constraint the vegetarian food market must be removed.
- By 2030, the dice will already have dropped. Now is the time for setting the course of the EU's future food policy. *Food 2030* must not only be a slogan, it must mean change towards sustainability.

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2019 will be an important and busy year full of changes — for the European Union as a whole and also for the plant-based community. While it will most certainly be challenging, a new composition of legislative and executive authorities presents fresh opportunities for new focuses and shifts in perspective. As the European Vegetarian Union (EVU), we encourage political bodies, politicians, decision makers and stakeholders to consider the potential that plant-based foods provide for food policies and many other policy areas.

One of the most important frameworks for shaping agricultural production in the EU is the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)**. Currently, the design of CAP post-2020 is being negotiated. In order to make the EU's food and agricultural system more sustainable, EVU urges decision makers to put an emphasis on plant-based foods, for example, by shifting more support to plant-based protein for human consumption. Furthermore, CAP subsidies must be tied closely to improvements in environmental, climate, animal-welfare and public-health policies. A deeply needed shift away from resource-intensive animal agriculture will open the way for more sustainable food production and reduce pressure on the environment, animals, and the well-being of Europe's citizens.

Furthermore, the influence of agriculture and dietary habits on **climate change**, especially in industrialised countries, remains largely ignored, but urgently needs to be addressed. Since animal agriculture is responsible for around 16 per cent of global greenhouse gases<sup>1</sup>, switching to more plant-based options and the production of plant-based protein sources has the potential to significantly reduce emissions and relieve the pressure on our food systems, while taking into account the expected increases in world population. European politicians should acknowledge this potential and consider political measures to reduce livestock numbers and boost plant-protein production. Rearing fewer animals would allow for improved animal-welfare standards, as requested by a steadily growing number of European citizens, combined with sustainable value creation for European farmers.

**Diets and diet-related diseases** are growing health concerns that slowly gain more recognition. Plant-based diets have the potential to improve public health and tackle various non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases and diabetes. Public catering plays a vital role in providing food for many people, especially children and students, and can therefore set an example. Public procurement and political guidelines should influence the offerings in public canteens to be healthier and more climate-friendly, which can be achieved by regularly providing more plant-based options.

More specific improvements in the framework for plant-based diets include **food labelling**. The most pressing issue here is the **legal definition of the terms 'vegan' and 'vegetarian'**. The European legislator called on the European Commission to issue an implementing act with definitions for these terms in 2011.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the Commission has remained inactive. As the number of vegans and vegetarians, as well as people who frequently choose plant-based options, is steadily increasing, it is of vital importance that they have reliable information to make informed consumption decisions. Therefore, clear and consistent rules on what constitutes vegetarian and vegan products are necessary. EVU urges the Commission to start working on the implementing act.

<sup>1</sup> FAO (2017): Global Livestock Environmental Assessment Model (GLEAM). GLEAM 2.0 - Assessment of greenhouse gas emissions and mitigation potential. Available at [www.fao.org/gleam/en/](http://www.fao.org/gleam/en/)

<sup>2</sup> Art. 36 lit. 3 (b) Regulation (EU) No 1169/2011 (FIC-Regulation)

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In the last couple of years there were several attacks on vegetarian and vegan alternative products bearing **sales denominations** resembling those of their meaty counterparts in order to indicate valuable product information to interested customers. A few countries tried to put bans on names like 'vegetarian schnitzel' altogether, Germany has established vague and arbitrary guidelines which allow certain sales denominations and prohibit others. Opponents of 'meaty terms' for plant-based products argue that consumers might be confused and mix up the products. Evidence for this reasoning has not yet been brought forward. On the contrary, a representative survey conducted by the Federation of German Consumer Organisations (vzbv) found that only four per cent of German customers have ever unintentionally bought a vegetarian product instead of a meat product, or vice versa. This shows that people are not generally confused by this practice, and yet certain interest groups seek to change the established labelling practice. Legislators should not buy into the myth of confused consumers and refrain from introducing any bans on the current well-tried labelling practice, so that customers can make informed and independent shopping decisions.

**Plant-based dairy alternatives** face similar and additional disadvantages. For instance, in many European countries, plant-based milks are taxed with a higher VAT rate than cow's milk although they represent eco-friendly alternatives and are used in the same way. Moreover, the **Common Market Organisation (CMO)** prohibits plant-based dairy alternatives from bearing sales denominations such as 'soya milk' or 'vegan cheese'. As it evolves, the CMO needs to reconsider its rigidity and whether the ban on dairy denominations for plant-based products is still warranted. In a first step, the Commission should update Decision 2010/791/EU, which exempts traditional denominations such as coconut milk from the dairy ban, and consult Member States about useful additions like 'soya milk'.

#### **About EVU:**

The European Vegetarian Union ([www.euroveg.eu](http://www.euroveg.eu)) is the voice of the growing number of Europeans who are choosing vegetarian and vegan products over animal-based nutrition. Its aim is to make vegetarian and meat-reduced lifestyles attractive, available, and safe for consumers, producers, and traders, and to provide adequate information on related health issues, as well as on animal health and welfare, and environmental protection, with reference to a vegetarian lifestyle. EVU is also the organisation that backs the V-Label ([www.v-label.eu](http://www.v-label.eu)), a voluntary certified labelling scheme. EVU is registered in the Register of Interest Representatives (No. 109356110578-03).

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