

Roadmap consultation: Farm to Fork Strategy

Europatat is the European Potato Trade Association, comprising both national associations and individual companies involved in the trade of seed, ware and early potatoes throughout Europe. Its members include a wide range of traders (including breeders, distributors, storers, packers, importers and exporters) delivering seed potatoes to farmers, raw material to the food industry, and packed potatoes to the retailers and food service sector. As such, Europatat members will be directly concerned by the upcoming “Farm to Fork Strategy” and, through this paper, would like to give input to the current Roadmap consultation.

Introduction

The concern regarding food sustainability along the whole supply chain has been increasing in the political agenda in the past years. There is a need to secure a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, a message that the potato sector fully endorses. The European Potato sector is already taking responsibility towards relevant EU ambitions such as:

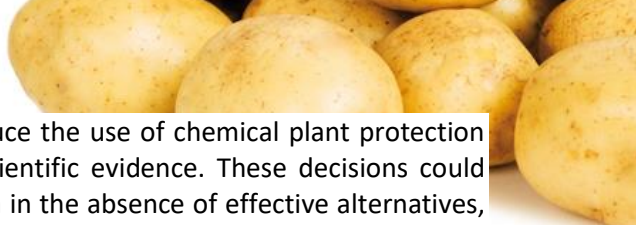
- Better management and reduction of chemical plant protection products: potato breeders are constantly working on the development of new varieties resistant to new pests and climate conditions so the need to use chemical plant protection products can be significantly reduced in the coming years.
- Reducing plastic packaging while ensuring that no food waste is generated: potato packers are already testing and using alternatives to reduce the use of virgin plastic in packaging such as bags made from 50% sugar cane or packaging made of cellulose film and biodegradable paper.
- Promoting sustainable food consumption by providing better consumer information on origin and nutritional facts and storage conditions: potato packaging labelling not only already includes information about the origin of the product and its nutritional aspects, but also on the best way to store potatoes at households so they do not go to waste. Also, the EU funding campaign “Potatoes: Prepare to be surprised. Europe’s favourite since 1536”, which will be run by Europatat as from this year, will spread the message that potatoes fit in a healthy and sustainable lifestyle because of their good nutritional and health aspects, and its sustainability.
- Transition towards a more sustainable storage and transport: potato traders are constantly improving the storage and transport conditions to reduce the environmental impact of their business while ensuring food safety.

Accordingly, Europatat is involved in several EU platforms for discussion such as the Civil Dialogue Groups CAP and Quality and Promotion of DG Agri, the Advisory Group on the Food Chain on Animal and Plant Health of DG SANTE, or the EFSA’s Stakeholder Forum. Europatat is also an active member of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste and its sub-group on food waste measurement and has contributed to recent public consultations and meetings on topics such as unfair trading practices and market Transparency, organic production and environmental risk assessment of plant protection products.

Europatat’s feedback on the Roadmap

Europatat welcomes the Roadmap published by the European Commission, and the fact that a coherent European policy and regulatory framework for sustainable food systems will be developed. In doing so, the Commission should take a pragmatic and realistic approach, ensuring that the new initiatives and targets under the Farm to Fork Strategy are coherent with the current EU legislation and the alternatives already





available in the market. For instance, envisaged measures to reduce the use of chemical plant protection products and fertilisers should be pre-assessed and based on scientific evidence. These decisions could impact significantly on the yields and the quality of the production in the absence of effective alternatives, and therefore they could also have a strong upstream effect on the whole supply chain including consumers.

Given the disruption that the Farm to Fork regulatory framework can trigger on European food business' commercial activities, the European Commission should help and invest in the find of pragmatic and effective solutions to the challenges that the agri-food sector will inevitably encounter along the coming years. In this sense, Europatat is pleased to see that the Commission aims to stimulate research and innovation to provide solutions for sustainable food systems and market opportunities. For instance, new technologies such as new plant breeding techniques can contribute to various goals of the European Green Deal by saving land resources and reducing crop protection products while stabilising and increasing crop yields to provide food security.

Finally, Europatat considers that the roadmap is adequate since it foresees consultations with stakeholders via different formats. However, taking into account that the Farm to Fork Strategy is expected to be unveiled by the Commission on 25 March 2020 and that this consultation ends on 16 March 2020, Europatat believes that there is not so much time to consider stakeholders' feedback and to integrate them in the Strategy.

Conclusion

The European potato sector will continue its role as a leading partner on the sustainability of the supply chain and the transition to a circular economy, including food waste reduction, better storage and packaging solutions, and a sustainable use of chemicals and transport. The potato sector is already contributing to a more efficient and healthy food system, and Europatat's members are committed to respond to current opportunities and social demands that will be reflected in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Europatat makes itself available for any further input, information or feedback that the European Commission might deem useful, and already looks forward to contributing to future consultations and dedicated meetings on the topic.

