



Subject: On World Health Day, Slow Food calls on EU Commissioners to push forward more ambitious food policies to address health crises

Brussels, 7 April 2023

Dear Commissioners Stella Kyriakides, Janusz Wojciechowski, and Virginijus Sinkevičius,

On the occasion of World Health Day, Slow Food urges you to push forward ambitious food policies to address the many food-related health crises Europe is facing today.

For Slow Food, only food systems, foods and diets that are equally healthy for people and the planet can contribute to fair, long-term health. We call for more decisive action to transform our European food systems in **our new paper [Our Food, Our Health: A Healthy Food System for the European Union](#)** in which we share our vision and recommendations.

In the coming months, several critical food policy files will be discussed which will have important implications for the health of the planet, of animals, and of citizens in Europe and abroad. These files represent the last opportunities for this Commission to set a clear path for the transition to sustainable and healthy EU food systems ahead of the European Parliament elections next year. Looking beyond the election calendar, it is urgent to act swiftly for a transition.

These are the four critical food policy files where we ask you for ambition:

- Slow Food fully supports the Commission's initiative to propose a **Sustainable Food Systems Legislative Framework**: it has a real potential to transform food systems to safeguard the health of our planet, people and animals by promoting policy coherence. To this end, the framework must set the direction of travel to both move food production towards agroecology, binding all food-related laws and policies, particularly the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy, and to support a transition to healthy and sustainable diets for all by developing enabling food environments that promote local, minimally-processed, and mostly plant-based foods. It is particularly urgent to act to make healthy and sustainable diets accessible and affordable as strong food inflation is likely to exacerbate the [lack of accessibility to healthy diets by low-income households](#) and social inequalities in obesity, and the incidence of non-communicable diseases.
- On the other hand, the proposal to deregulate **New Genomic Techniques** could have [serious negative implications for health](#) as there are real concerns around the precision of these techniques, the risk and safety of which Slow Food believes must continue to be thoroughly assessed on a case by case basis, following the precautionary principle as ruled by the [European Court of Justice in 2018](#). Slow Food urges the EU to focus on supporting proven solutions that promote biodiversity, instead of wasting resources on developing techno-fixes that perpetuate a model of agriculture based on monocultures and industrial farming, detrimental to the planet and people.

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- The revision of the **Animal Welfare legislation** is another key opportunity to promote the health not only of animals but of citizens too, as our health is intrinsically linked to theirs. The Commission must take a bold decision and propose a revision of the legislation under the One Welfare approach, supporting cage-free, extensive, circular and mixed farming models. This file is connected to all the dimensions of sustainability and could have a positive impact on the profitability of small- and medium-scale farms, the biodiversity of our ecosystems, the reduction of antimicrobial resistance responsible for an [estimated 33,000 deaths per year in the EU](#), and consequently, the prevention of non-communicable diseases and of pandemics.
- The **Sustainable Use of Pesticides Regulation**, whilst is a first step in the right direction, must do more to protect especially the most vulnerable groups to the toxic effects of synthetic pesticides: food producers and households in rural areas. In Europe there are about [1,6 million poisoning accidents](#). Many millions more poisoning cases occur in the Global South, often attributed to pesticides banned in, but still produced in the EU. Slow Food calls on you to show a true vision to phase out the use of synthetic pesticides by 2035 and support farmers to transition to agroecology, as requested by [1,1 million EU citizens in the Save Bees and Farmers European Citizens Initiative](#). The [response](#) given by the European Commission on 5 April simply does not go far enough to meet citizens' demand and concerns. It is high time that the EU shows coherence, and that prohibited pesticides in the EU are not allowed to be exported abroad.

Together, these four policies represent true opportunities to shift towards locally-grounded, diversified agroecological food systems that provide healthy food for all and to reverse the alarming rise of diet-related illnesses, whilst also protecting climate and the environment, and respecting animals. These opportunities cannot be missed. It is urgent that the Commission take a truly holistic approach to food systems, recognise the One Health principles, and propose measures to significantly improve food environments so that sustainable healthy diets are the most available, accessible, affordable, pleasurable and widely promoted.

We thank you in advance for your consideration and take the opportunity to request a meeting with you to discuss Slow Food's recommendations at your earliest convenience.

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Secretary General of Slow Food

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