Brussels, 10 November 2016

Mr Phil Hogan
Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development
European Commission
Berlaymont
1049 Brussels

Copy to: Mr Miguel Arias Cañete, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy
Mr Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries
Mr Vytenis Andriukaitis, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

[Letter sent by e-mail]

Dear Commissioner Hogan,

We write to you to express our concerns regarding your recent commitment to invest in promoting meat consumption in Europe and promoting European beef in foreign markets.

Promoting meat consumption is in direct contradiction with the European Union's objective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and is even more striking now that the Paris Climate Agreement has just come into force (November 4, 2016).

Livestock production is responsible for approximately 14.5% of all anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions, more than from all global transport[i]. The Chatham House Royal Institute of International Affairs recently concluded that our appetite for meat is an important driver of climate change and a reduction of global meat consumption will be critical to keeping global warming below the 'danger level' of two degrees Celsius, the main goal of the climate negotiations in Paris[ii], let alone the aspiration of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees. Studies estimate that realistic changes in eating patterns involving lower levels of meat consumption could reduce food-related greenhouse gas emissions by 25-40%.[iii]

With COP22 now underway, the European Union should be pressing for the need to foster a transition towards sustainable diets at these negotiations, for instance by promoting healthy plant-based diets. Introducing measures to further increase meat consumption will undermine the EU's credibility and commitment to tackling climate change.

Increasing meat consumption, which would further boost industrial meat production, would have severe environmental consequences and hamper the much-needed shift towards sustainable farming practices supporting the whole range of ecosystem services. Livestock production takes up 75% of the world's agricultural land, including both the land used to grow animal feed and that which is devoted to pasture and grazing[iv]. The continued demand for meat is a central factor in deforestation, biodiversity loss, soil degradation and the depletion of our water resources.

The recent analysis on sustainable development conducted by the European Political Strategy Centre for President Juncker highlights the negative environmental impacts of industrialized meat production. The analysis states in particular that: "*Large-size animal production leads to large amounts of manure, which crop production cannot absorb. This leads to unhealthy levels of nitrogen in surface waters in the main production areas. There are scientific studies showing that the denitrification capacity of soils is rapidly declining, which would lead to nitrogen pollution also of the ground water reserves. All of this argues for a lower animal per hectare production process*."[v]

Animal welfare is at stake too. 8 billion land animals are slaughtered each year in the EU. Most of these are kept in conditions that do not allow them to express their natural behaviours. All too often, their transport to the abattoir and their slaughter fails to respect the most basic animal welfare standards. Thus, the reality of meat production is clearly in breach of EU Treaty provisions, which state that the EU's agricultural policy should pay full regard to animal welfare. The mass consumption of industrially produced meat is the root cause of the problem, and accordingly, maintaining or increasing the current level of meat consumption will make it impossible to address the problem of animal suffering in the farming sector.

Finally, your commitment to promoting meat consumption also goes against the urgent need to tackle chronic diet-related diseases. High levels of processed meat and red meat consumption are associated with various diseases including obesity, cardiovascular diseases, type-2 diabetes, several cancers and an elevated risk of all-round mortality.[vi] Reducing meat consumption can play an essential role in improving people's health and would significantly reduce pressure on Europe's health systems.

On the basis of the facts and information provided above, we urge the Commission to refrain form using public money to support meat consumption. We see no future for Europe's livestock sector in pursuing the objective of ever higher consumption to drive ever higher production, and support instead a fundamental reorientation of the sector towards smaller volumes, higher quality, respect for animal welfare, higher environmental sustainability, lower emissions and a reconnection between the livestock and arable sectors.

We would like to request a meeting to discuss the issue at stake in further detail.

We thank you in advance for your response.

Yours sincerely,

Paolo Di Croce, Secretary General, **Slow Food**
Philip Lymbery, Chief Executive, **Compassion in World Farming**
Sue Dibb, Coordinator, **Eating Better**
Reineke Hameleers, Director, **Eurogroup for Animals**
Jeremy Wates, Secretary General, **European Environmental Bureau**

Nina Renshaw, Secretary General, **European Public Health Alliance (EPHA)**
Saskia Ozinga, Campaigns Coordinator, **Fern**
Magda Stoczkiewicz, Director, **Friends of the Earth Europe**
Clare Oxborrow, Senior Food and Farming Campaigner, **Friends of the Earth (England, Wales Northern Ireland)**
Jorgo Riss, Director, **Greenpeace European Unit**
Dr Joanna Swabe, Executive Director, **Humane Society International/Europe**
Federica Martin, Board Director, **Safe Food Advocacy Europe (SAFE)**

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