

ACTIVITY REPORT

SAFE-Safe Food Advocacy Europe



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1 Publications & Communications

Bi-monthly Newsletters are sent to SAFE's members to inform them on the latest news about EU food law and food safety.

Information materials aimed at consumers are produced on diverse topics such as excessive sugar consumption, food packaging reduction, food waste management, food coloring. These materials are available on demand and/or available online on SAFE's website. Moreover, the website of SAFE TAO project is now open and accessible for all here: <https://meet-tao.eu/>

2 Food Safety, Health & Nutrition

Lobbying on the food colorant E171

Titanium Dioxide (TiO₂) in food, more commonly known as food additive E171, often takes the form of nanoparticles and can be found as a white colourant in food (such as cakes, cheese, chewing-gums or candies) as well as in cosmetics, toothpaste and paints. Although EU food law allows the use of food additives as long as they pose no safety concerns, are technologically needed and not misleading, E171 as a food additive only serves an aesthetical purpose and is potentially harmful to our health.

Due to scientific uncertainties and an incomplete risk assessment from EFSA, the French government decided to ban products with E171 starting from the 1st of January 2020. This precautionary measure should be applied to the entire EU. SAFE and 36 other European and National NGOs sent a letter supporting the French ban to EC vice-president at the time, Jyrki Katainen, on 3rd of May 2019. SAFE, together with a coalition of NGOs, attended a meeting with Ms Anne Bucher, Head of DG SANTE of the European Commission to discuss this issue on 11 July 2019.

The European Commission and EU countries whose experts are members of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCOPAFF) are still arguing that a harmonized European legislation should prevail. The final decision of this Committee will be based on an opinion of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to be published in 2020. However, EFSA's latest opinion published on 12 July 2019 highlighted the need for more data to finalise their risk assessment. A recently-published study that both EFSA and SCOPAFF were waiting for, concluded that the additive caused no adverse effects on human health. The study was however, financed by three industry lobby groups (among which the Titanium Dioxide Manufacturers Association, the TDMA) who all have substantial commercial interests in E171 not being banned in the whole EU.

The SCOPAFF met for the last time at the end of September 2019. There are but few pieces of information available surrounding the meeting, but it would however, seem that the Member States are rather unfavourable to the extension of the French ban on E171.



SAFE, ECOS and the French NGO Agir pour l'Environnement therefore launched a [petition](#) (available in French, English, Spanish,

Italian, German and Polish) in September 2019, which has been very successful, collecting over 84,000 signatures from consumers all around Europe.

In an open joint letter sent on 5 December 2019, SAFE brought forward consumers' concerns and urged the newly-appointed European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella Kyriakides, to support the French ban on E171 based on the precautionary principle and the strong scientific expertise already available. All European consumers should have the same level of protection. Our message was backed by 34 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), which sent a similar letter to Commissioner Kyriakides at the same time.



Acrylamide

Acrylamide is a food contaminant known to be carcinogenic and largely found in fried and baked products: potatoes, bread, biscuits, cereals, coffee and even baby food. Starting in 2016, SAFE advocated for this substance to be regulated at the EU level in order to limit its presence in food and thus its impact on consumers' health. In 2018, Regulation n°2017/2158, establishing mitigation measures and benchmark levels for the reduction of the presence of acrylamide in food, was finally adopted (applicable in the EU from 11th of April 2018). However, consumers' health cannot only rely on benchmarks. For this reason SAFE continued advocating to set maximum levels to reduce acrylamide; as a priority, maximum levels of acrylamide should be applied to baby foods (as infants are the age group most exposed to acrylamide and its hazards).

It seems that SAFE call has been heard as in 2019 the Commission decided to introduce maximum levels for baby food as well as biscuits and rusks intended for infants and young children. Although, SAFE welcomed the Commission's initiative, we insisted, in a **position paper submitted to the Commission in 2019**, on the importance to also set maximum levels for other types of food largely consumed by young children. Furthermore, SAFE underlined the fact that recent tests results reveal that many food products contain higher acrylamide levels than the benchmarks, highlighting the need for maximum level to efficiently protect consumers' health.

The ban on the use of meat denominations for products not containing meat: the vegan burger issue

In the context of the EU institutions' negotiations over the 2021-2027 Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), a member of the European Parliament (MEP) introduced a new amendment which would prohibit the use of terms usually used for meat products, such as sausage, burger or escalope, to be used for products not containing meat. In more trivial terms, this means the denominations such as «veggie burger» or «vegan sausage» would be prohibited.

Considering that the consumers' demand for vegan products has been gradually growing over the past years and that those consumers are now used to terms such as «vegan sausage» or «veggie burger», which help them to easily purchase products their particular diets, SAFE decided to intervene to ensure that this amendment would not pass. In July 2019, SAFE started to work with several environmental or animal welfare NGOs to campaign against this amendment. To this end, a joint letter was sent at the end of July to ask MEPs from the ENVI and AGRI Committees to delete this amendment. Following this letter, SAFE met several MEPs and coordinated its action with the other NGOs and also with lobbies from the plant-based food industry. Thanks to this advocacy work, the European Green political group and the European United Left political group of the European Parliament requested to delete this amendment or proposed a new version which would allow plant-based products to use meat denominations. A position that now seems to be also supported by the European political group Renew. The CAP negotiations are currently on hold, the situation on this dossier is thus to be followed when they will be back on track.

The TAO Project



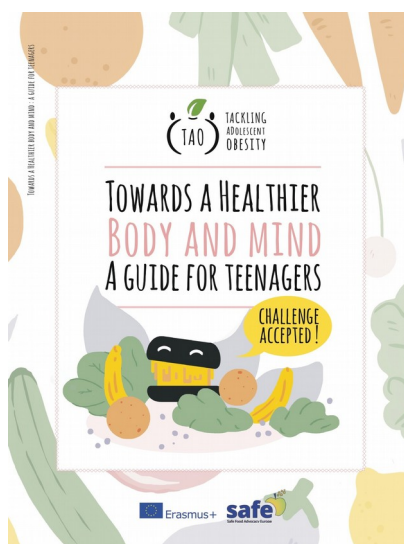
In September 2018, SAFE was selected to be part of the European Commission's Erasmus+ Programme which provides financial support for the implementation of European actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Social inclusion. The project is running for a 30-month period from September 2018 until February 2021. As part of this Programme, SAFE is coordinating the "TAO Project", which is an acronym that stands for "*Tackling Adolescent Obesity and promoting inclusion through nutrition trainings for disadvantaged youth*". The project aims to create a nutrition training to be taught in as many schools as possible within the EU and which will be

supported by 3 educational materials specifically addressing obesity-related issues such as nutrition fundamentals, health and psychological issues, discrimination, bullying and physical activity.

The consortium encompasses 10 partners stemming from 5 EU Member States that have very complementary profiles. Indeed, partners are coming from very diverse horizons such as European networks specialised in the field of nutrition and adolescent obesity like the European Childhood Obesity Group (ECOG) or Safe Food Advocacy Europe (SAFE), Italian and German national obese patient associations (AdipositasHilfe Deutschland, Amici Obesi), the Medical Faculty of Rzeszow, an association that gathers nutritionist and dietitians expert on plant-based diets (SONVE), a psychologist expert on obesity-related matters (Emotifood) and, last but not least, three high schools in which trainings will be tested.

In 2019, two transnational meetings have been successfully organised: one in Brussels and one in Rzeszów. All items on the agenda have been addressed and the schedules as well as the timeline have both been respected.

Thanks to this hard work, the consortium gave shape to two out of the three educational materials: the Students' manual as well as the TAO online website which are both accessible for free on this link: <https://meet-tao.eu/>.



released

Indeed, the first intellectual output is finished and is 90-pages long. The structure established at the beginning of the project was followed, except for necessary adjustments. As the leading partner, the University of Rzeszów gathered all the contents from the partners and assembled them in one single document. Layout and proofreading were completed by SAFE. The collective of graphic designers, called SpicyNova, did an excellent job for formatting in a professional and colourful way the English version of students' handbook. Translations in Greek, Italian and French are soon to be

The second intellectual output is on very good tracks too. After many meetings with the web designers, the website was released on the 21th of October 2019 which has been soon after been updated with all the contents written by the partners in four European languages. The third

intellectual output is in progress. Both the structure of the handbook and the lesson plan template for each section have been finalised. The same collective of graphic designers will help us format the layout properly.

Sugar Project



SAFE's Sugar Project started in February 2017 in Belgium and continued in 2018 and 2019 with the Campaign **"Désucrez-vous! Du sucre oui, mais pas trop"**. The Project aims at improving EU legislation, raise public awareness and offer better tools for consumers to make healthier choices.

In 2019, SAFE continued to **train children and teenagers in Belgian schools to adopt healthier diets with lower daily sugar intake** (with the support of the Ministry of Education of the *Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*). This past year has been particularly successful as in 2019 SAFE gave twice more trainings than in 2018. Moreover, in addition to the trainings dedicated to sugar over-consumption, SAFE created a brand new training focusing on labeling and packaging. SAFE also started to start delivering those trainings not only to children, but to their parents as well.



The two trainings consist of 2-hour interactive courses gathering several classes of children age from 8 to 14 years old and including a presentation, short videos, games and quizzes. The children leave the trainings with flyers gathering all useful information, to help them put into practice what they have learned on the topic. The training targeting the parents is a bit shorter and includes information both about sugar over-consumption and labeling.

42 trainings took place between February and September 2019 and reached over 900 children and teenagers in Belgium and more than 50 parents.

In light of the success of its project in Belgium, SAFE started to export its trainings. After discussing the project with its member Amici Obesi and the Cariplo Foundation in 2018, SAFE is now happy to announce that in 2019 the trainings were given in two schools in Milan, reaching more than 200 children. To this aim, Amici Obesi was trained by our team and a nutritionist was put in charge of dispense the trainings in the schools.

Finally, as a proof of its trainings' quality, in June 2019 SAFE Sugar Project was awarded the certificate of best practice by the European Commissioners for Health, Agriculture and Research.



3 Transparency in the Food Chain: SAFE & The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA)

SAFE became a member of two new EFSA working groups

In 2019, SAFE, thanks to its increasing presence in the EU food safety scene, has been invited to become a member of two additional EFSA working groups:

- The EFSA Technical Group on Database of Notification of Studies
- The EFSA Stakeholder Sounding Board for the implementation of the revised General Food Law

For SAFE to be member of these groups is a great opportunity to ensure that the interests of European consumers are represented at the highest relevant level. SAFE already took the opportunity of its membership to those groups to emphasise on the need for the revised General Food Law to ensure the independence of EFSA's work as well as its full transparency. It is essential that consumers' health stays at the heart of EFSA's work and to reduce its reliance on industry funded studies.

EFSA Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks

Polish beef, food scandals across the EU

SAFE, as a member of EFSA's Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks (StaDG-ER) attended the 21st meeting of the Discussion Group on April 10 and 11, 2019. On this occasion, SAFE underlined that the scandal of the fraudulent beef originating from sick cows in a Polish slaughterhouse was only the latest in a long list: from the mad cow epidemics to the fipronil case. SAFE insisted that Member States have the obligation to put in place dissuasive and effective penalties against fraudulent breaches of EU food law and that it was their duty to take effective control measures to prevent hazardous behaviour from food producers and industries.

SAFE took the opportunity of the meeting to emphasise on the fact that the outbreak of food scandals in the recent years has shown that it is more important than ever to strengthen the regulatory framework around food safety and animal welfare.

Titanium dioxide in food: food colorant E171

During the 22nd meeting of EFSA Stakeholder Discussion Group on Emerging Risks held on September 9th 2019, SAFE presented its concerns regarding the food colorant E171. This food colorant has been

authorized in the EU since 1969, however, recent studies show that titanium dioxide could be the cause of several health issues such as the alteration and inflammation of the intestinal system, the development of several cancers, as well as gestational diabetes. Moreover, based on an assessment of 25 different studies made by the French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health and Safety (ANSES), the French Government decided to ban the use of the substance, starting in January 2020. SAFE thus took the opportunity of this meeting to call on the European Commission to support the French Government decision and to extend it to all EU Member States.

Participation of SAFE at EFSA's Stakeholders' Forum

On October 17th and 18th 2019, SAFE's Secretary General, Floriana Cimmarusti, participated to the 3rd EFSA Stakeholder Forum in Parma. During the forum, apart from taking on the role of facilitator in the debate, Ms Cimmarusti raised the issue of the lack of concrete actions resulting from the subjects discussed in the EFSA's Emerging Risks working group. SAFE's Secretary General called on EFSA to effectively take into account the requests addressed in that working group and act upon them.

4 Building of the EU Food Policy Coalition

In April 2019, SAFE participated to a meeting organized by the think tank IPES-Food and opened to all the organizations which contributed to the report 'Towards a Common Food Policy for the EU'. This report, which was sent to the Commission at the end of 2018, proposes a viable way to reach and implement a common integrated and sustainable food policy in the EU. IPES-Food created a coalition of organizations to promote the implementation of this report in order to achieve a more sustainable food system in Europe. During this meeting, the decision to create the EU Food Policy Coalition was formally taken and SAFE submitted its application to become one of the seven organizations sitting at its Executive Board.

At the first General Assembly of the Coalition in May, SAFE became an official member of its Executive Board and, as such, started working together with the other members of the Executive Board to build and strengthen the Coalition. SAFE also got involved in various task forces of the Coalition dedicated to specific objectives. This is how in July, together with other members of the Coalition, SAFE sent a letter to the new AGRI Committee to ask to improve the CAP to achieve a more sustainable food production system. That same month, SAFE coordinated the communication campaign surrounding the sending of an open letter to the new Commission President, Ms Ursula von der Leyen. This letter was asking for the creation of a position of Vice-President for food policy. The idea was that with a Vice-President dedicated to food policy, it would be easier to coordinate the work of all DGs involved in food systems and thus achieve a food production more aligned with environmental needs. Since then, SAFE has been involved in many other actions led by the Coalition to improve the EU food systems.

5 Food waste

Background

As food production is one of the biggest impacts humans have had on ecosystems for centuries, its management is understandably a vast environmental and climate issue. Despite being responsible for more than 80% of deforestation, 70% of fresh water consumption and being the largest cause of biodiversity loss¹, food production and distribution systems are throwing away roughly 1.3 billion tons of food every year^{2, 3}. Hence, it has been estimated that more than a third of the food produced worldwide will never be consumed.

In 2013, the total waste generated in the EU amounted to roughly 2,5 million tons, of which 1,6 million tons were not reused or recycled. Only a limited portion of municipal waste is recycled, the remaining 31% is landfilled and 26% is incinerated. On the other hand, EU food waste alone is estimated between 88 and 140 million tons per year, for an estimated cost of 143 billion euros. Moreover, food waste generates about 8% of greenhouse emissions while 55 million EU citizens cannot afford a quality meal every other day.

In 2019, SAFE continued its advocacy and awareness-raising work started in 2018 to tackle this issue.

State of play

On 18 April 2018, the European Parliament voted to formally adopt the revised Waste Legislation Package, which sets higher targets for waste management on recycling, packaging and landfilling for 2025 and 2030. This package (which includes the Directive on waste, Directive on the landfill of waste, Directive on packaging and packaging waste and Directive on end-of-life vehicles and batteries and accumulators) is a key element in the Circular Economy Action Plan adopted in 2015. The series of targets set out by the EU mainly focus on reusing valuable waste materials, improving municipal waste management and waste packaging practices across Member States while further strengthening the “waste hierarchy” by placing prevention, re-use and recycling ahead of landfilling and incineration.

¹ FUSIONS (2016), Estimates of European food waste levels. Consulted on [link](#)

² FAO (2011), Global food losses and food waste – Extent, causes and prevention. Consulted on [link](#)

³ WRI (2017), Guidance on Interpreting Sustainable Development Goal Target 12.3. Consulted on [link](#)

In a 2016 position paper, NGOs had already voiced their concerns over the European food waste policy and called for the re-introduction of EU-specific food waste reduction target of 30%⁴. These organisations pointed out that EU legislation should include farm-to-fork food waste measurement with a roadmap for bringing in targets for pre-farm gate waste by 2020 and embed the Food Waste Hierarchy in all food waste reduction measures, while allowing diversion of food waste to livestock feed. This Is Rubbish released a petition, endorsed by over 125,000 signatories and 67 organisations including SAFE, commending the 50% target to food waste reduction.

But NGOs called for even stricter binding food waste targets from each Member State. Indeed the 50% food waste target sounds ambiguous and is unclear whether it applies to both retail and consumer waste, which is why SAFE strongly calls on Member States to set national binding targets for a 50% reduction of food waste from farm-to-fork by 2030.

SAFE's Advocacy actions in 2019

Mid-March, SAFE collaborated with 15 NGOs from CAPNGO to send an open letter addressing all AGRI Committee MEPs regarding their upcoming vote on the CAP Strategic Plans. This open letter was aiming at encouraging AGRI Committee MEPs to follow the positive example of their ENVI Committee colleagues and support their amendments. This letter was also published on SAFE's and other NGOs' websites, and supported by a large social media campaign on Twitter and Facebook.

In January and February, SAFE continued its close collaboration with the NGO Feedback and exchange information on the new developments regarding the Commission's Delegated Act on food waste measurement. Thanks to this exchange of information, SAFE learned that the consultation on the Delegated Act had been delayed and would probably come out beginning of March.

Beginning of March, the consultation on the Delegated Act was finally open. SAFE and Feedback worked together to draft a common answer, which could be used by all the members of the Food Waste Working Group. In addition to this common answer, Feedback and SAFE also elaborated a policy brief supporting their case.

Mid-March, SAFE and Feedback started their campaign for the consultation on the Delegated Act. SAFE distributed the common answer and the related policy brief to all Food Waste Working Group members while Feedback did the same with its partners. Moreover, thanks the closer collaboration

⁴ FLW Protocol (2016). Food Loss and Waste Accounting and Reporting Standard. Consulted on [link](#)

established with the NGOs Zero Food Waste Europe and European Environmental Bureau, SAFE was able to extend the number of organisations reached by this campaign. This action for the consultation was also strengthened by a social media campaign and a press release.

End of March, together with Feedback, SAFE worked on finding out the names of all the Member States representatives involved in the Delegated Act. It then drafted a joint intended to convince those representatives to ask for the inclusion of guidelines on the voluntary measurement of harvest food waste in the Delegated Act. This joint letter, signed by most of the Working Group members, was then sent to the Member States representatives on April 4. SAFE sent follow up emails to this joint letter and manage to get an answer from the French representative with whom it exchanged and supported our claim.

Beginning of May, the Commission issued the final version of the Delegated Act. This final version did not include any guidelines for harvest food waste measurement despite our efforts. The Commission justified her choice as follow: *“A frequent request was to include in the act voluntary monitoring of food losses and waste at farm level, including non-harvested plants. However, as the Member States are not yet ready to conduct such monitoring, this request was not taken into account for the time being.”*. However, it seems that our voice was still heard on the meeting of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste on May 6, The Commission announced that it was starting to look for funding possibilities for research on harvest food waste measurement, notably Horizon 2020 funding.

In June, SAFE worked in close collaboration with Feedback in order to see if the farmers’ organization Copa Cogeca could eventually support our claim for the measurement of harvest food waste. We had few exchanges with them (especially Mr Ricardo Siligato) over emails and phone in order to show them all the benefits they could get from measuring harvest food waste. The exchanges were extremely interesting, and it seems that the organisation could be open for harvest food waste measurement as long as the burden does not fall on the farmers.

In June and July, SAFE continued its work of contacting MEPs to act on the Delegated Act. Close contacts were established with the office of MEP Monika Benova who was interested in using its right of scrutiny to oppose the last version of the Delegated Act. SAFE thus started to contact all possible ENVI MEPs in order to be able to implement this power of scrutiny. However, it appeared that not enough support could be found to oppose the act. Indeed, MEP Benova did not obtain the support of her group (S&D). In September, it was thus decided to gather MEPs signature for a joint

letter asking to act to reduce harvest food waste. It was also decided that this letter would be sent later, when there is a momentum for harvest food waste.

At the end of November, SAFE discussed with the NGOs Feedback and Zero Waste Europe on the possibility to create a common advocacy action plan for food waste and to work together to find funding for its implementation. A concept note outlining the project was produced and further meetings to start the fundraising work were convened.

SAFE's awareness-raising campaign 'One Man's Waste is Another Man's Treasure'



SAFE's awareness raising campaign to combat food waste, "One man's trash is another man's treasure", started in 2018, was successfully continued during 2019. The issues encountered during the implementation of the project had been solved and SAFE could now fully focus on the redistribution of surplus food to charities.

During 2019, SAFE worked with several reliable shops on a regular basis and developed strong ties with them. Thanks to SAFE's awareness raising work, these shops not only significantly reduced the amount of food waste they produced, but they also further adopted other good practices such as the collaboration with the platform Too Good To Go, which also fights food waste on its own level. SAFE was nevertheless able to reach 600 people weekly through its redistribution project, thus enabling charities to gain stability in their food supply.

SAFE also created a Flowchart, explaining the procedure for implementing a project of food waste redistribution, which was presented during an international fair in Rimini, Italy, and provided to the Italian association Confagricoltura for ideas on how they could expand a project similar to SAFE's in Italy.



This successful project has inspired SAFE to plan a new project on a bigger scale. Indeed, through SAFE's awareness-raising activities, we came to the conclusion that the biggest producers of food waste are not the small shops but rather bigger companies and structures such as hotels, where the impact of a project combatting food waste could be significantly higher. To

this effect, SAFE has signed an adhesion agreement to the Equoevento network, an Italian non-profit organization collecting food waste from conferences and other large-scale events. SAFE aims to implement a similar project in the city of Brussels during the two years to come.

6 Food Packaging

Background

The amount of food packaging has increased in recent years in part because of its practicability and convenience. As foodstuff is a product consumed 3 times a day on average by EU citizens, food-packaging waste increases accordingly; the impact of food packaging waste on the environment is therefore significant. Proper waste management, as well as promotion of less harmful material, is crucial to protect human health and the environment, to minimize the impact of food packaging waste and to promote more sustainable lifestyles.

SAFE's Advocacy Actions in 2019

At the end of April, SAFE has been interviewed by the journalist Cecilia Andrea Bacci for the creation of an episode of the famous Italian investigation TV magazine "REPORT" (on the TV channel RAI3). The interview focused on the 140 recycling processes for plastic used for food contact materials (FCMs) that have to be approved by the European Commission. The documentary will be broadcast in 2020. During this interview, SAFE explained in details the different health issues related to the approval of those recycling processes and the use of recycled plastic in FCMs.

In May, SAFE conducted additional research to develop a position paper to answer the Commission's consultation on the fitness of the EU current legislative framework on Food Contact Materials. SAFE's answer to the consultation was thus submitted that same month.

In order to strengthen SAFE's voice on Food Contact Materials, SAFE organised a meeting with FEVE, the federation of European manufacturers of glass containers, to explore possible ways of collaboration. SAFE and FEVE share common positions on plastic food packaging and thus agreed to inform each other of their respective advocacy work in order to maximise its impact. This collaboration also allows SAFE to benefit from additional research on FCMs thanks to FEVE's network of experts.

Thanks to its work on FCMs in 2018 and 2019, SAFE was contacted by the DG SANTE beginning of June to contribute on the Commission's consultation on migration limits for lead, cadmium and other materials from ceramic and vitreous food contact materials. Following the invitation from DG SANTE to participate to the consultation, SAFE worked on its contribution which was sent at the end of June.

In July SAFE was contacted to participate as a speaker to the Brussels Recycled Packaging for Food Contact conference organised on 18-19 September 2019. SAFE Secretary General, Floriana Cimmarusti, participated and contributed to the event with a presentation highlighting the health dangers associated with the use of recycled plastic for FCMs.

Due to its strong involvement in the FCMs topic, in August, SAFE was invited by DG SANTE to participate to a workshop to support the evaluation of the FCMs legislation. SAFE Secretary General, Floriana Cimmarusti, participated to the workshop on September 9. Together with other NGOs present that day, she made some proposals to improve the EU FCM legislation. On that same day, SAFE also established contacts with other NGOs working on FCMs such as CHEM Trust. Thanks to those contacts, SAFE joined a group of 25 NGOs which published a joint open letter regrouping common demands regarding the evaluation of the EU legislative framework on FCMs.

At the end of August, SAFE became part of the EU Waste Coalition, a group of around 10 NGOs working together to reduce waste. In September, SAFE participated with this group to the creation of a position paper setting “10 priorities to transform EU Waste Policy” which would be released for the “European Week of Waste Reduction” taking place from November 16 to November 24. Several of those 10 demands focused on developing the use of reusable packaging. The group worked on the position paper and the surrounding campaign which was launched on November 16. Posters of the position paper were displayed and distributed during various events organised in the framework of the “European Week of Waste Reduction”, and a social media campaign supported by the members of the EU Waste Coalition was launched in parallel.

In October, following its participation to the joint open letter on the evaluation of the EU legislative framework on FCMs, SAFE organised a meeting with Justine Maillot who is the person in charge of FCMs at Zero Waste Europe (ZWE). During this meeting SAFE and ZWE discussed possible other collaborations to improve the current FCMs legislative framework.

SAFE's Campaign 'Curb Plastic, Curb Waste'!

In 2019, SAFE further developed its campaign “*Un Emballage, Plusieurs Usages!*” (Curb Plastic, Curb Waste) in collaboration with Bruxelles Environment (the Brussels public Institute for Environmental management) and its “Zéro Déchet” (Zero Waste) programme: 400 reusable packaging products were distributed in a network of small, local shops in Brussels to replace some of the single-use packaging that those shops currently use.

SAFE indeed co-financed the start investment for 400 reusable packaging intended to be sold at a low price (less than 4€ a piece) for customers in 3 small local shops in the central area of Brussels (Dam'Tartines, CaffèLatte EspressoBar, Mike&Becky). SAFE paired this distribution with distributions of guidelines and awareness-raising material jointly made by SAFE, Bruxelles Environnement and the NGOs EcoRes/GroupeOne. These materials targeted shopkeepers willing to implement sustainable practices within their shops, but who do not know how. SAFE therefore also presented economic solutions (loyalty cards, etc.) to help shops find a financial incentive to convert to reusable packaging use.

Phase 1: In order to prepare the launch of the campaign, SAFE conducted several meetings with the three aforementioned small businesses interested in participating in the campaign during the first semester of 2019. SAFE gathered information and thoughts from shopkeepers regarding their respective roles, their interest in participating, practical information, their concerns, etc. In order to evaluate all options for sustainable reusable packaging, SAFE also met several times with the NGO EcoRes/Groupe One which is coordinating reusable packaging projects for restaurants and shops on behalf of Bruxelles Environnement. SAFE also met with the start-up 'Loop your box', supported by the region of Brussels, to try to create future synergies between SAFE's project and theirs. SAFE conducted a market study on types of reusable packaging for different products: coffee cups, soup bowls, and lunch boxes. SAFE compared prices, quality, durability, country of fabrication (giving preference to more local productions), alternative materials to plastic (silicone, metal, glass, bamboo). In the end, SAFE settled for a bamboo cup which could be used for all kinds of beverages in take-away shops.

A communication kit was also created and spread in partner shops. These communication materials were distributed to a large number of shops including big retail chains (Exki, Panos, Starbucks), via email or directly to shop managers. All shops were invited to join the campaign, although it proved difficult to include large, centralized retail chains on board as they usually use very tailored packaging and their internal commercial policies do not allow for a lot of flexibility as regards moving away from the use of plastic or single-use packaging. Despite a show of good faith and will to implement sustainable practice in such shops, it was assessed that more policy changes (both at EU level and national/regional) would be required to allow for more packaging waste reduction. SAFE contacted Brussels regional parliament and government (namely Brussels Environment minister Alain Maron's cabinet) to pull political levers on this issue and the issue of food waste management (*see Activity 1.1*), but the advocacy process has been slowed down due to ongoing budget negotiations at regional level and talks surrounding Belgian regional elections.

Phase 2: The campaign kicked-off in the second semester of 2019. Partner shopkeepers received all of SAFE's cups and sold them to their customers at an average 2€. It was important for customers to be economically involved in the awareness-raising campaign to underline the importance of keeping reusable packaging; moreover, bringing these cups back would guarantee them a discount in all three shops, which are very close to each other in Brussels.

To monitor the financial situation before, during and after the project, SAFE designed questionnaires that were distributed to shops. We are expecting answers to this questionnaire in the beginning of 2020. This material has also been submitted to Bruxelles Environnement to be used in its future projects.

- **Total number of packaging items distributed to shopkeepers in Brussels:** 400
- **Estimated total of households impacted:** 350 to 400

SAFE's campaign was also exported out of Brussels in the second semester of 2019; SAFE seized the opportunity to have a stand at the Ecomondo Fair 2019 (one of the leading events regarding circular and green economy) in Rimini (Italy) from 5 to 8 November 2019. This 23rd edition of the event, organized by the Italian Exhibition Group, saw 1,300 exhibitors from 30 countries take part in the many conferences and stands. In particular, Ecomondo 2019 hosted the annual meeting of the Assembly of the Green Economy, promoted by the National Green Economy Council, in collaboration with the Ministry of the Environment and the Ministry of Economic Development for an analysis and update on the current and crucial economic/regulatory issues. In this regard, Ecomondo dedicated this fair to the theme "For a Green New Deal in Italy and in Europe", with the purpose of jointly tackling the environmental crisis, starting with the climate crisis.

Furthermore, almost 100,000 visitors from 150 different countries all around the world attended the event. We actively interacted there with more than 1000 consumers and retailers over the course of the entire event and SAFE's activities on single-use packaging and food waste reduction were kindly introduced in a presentation by Mr Marco Rubinato, Project Advisor at EASME. SAFE's team members distributed 100 additional cups and detail its campaign objectives and concepts to shopkeepers, entrepreneurs, employees of the public administration willing to develop sustainable initiatives for their businesses/administration.

7 Sustainable agriculture: Permaculture & Stock-Free Organic Farming

Fostering sustainability and encouraging farmers to switch from intensive agriculture to more sustainable production practices falls within the broader hope to achieve sustainable food systems. Sustainability could be defined as the respect of the environment, healthier food production as well as minimum standards of living for every farmer involved in the food chain.

Sustainable food production encompasses different types of agriculture and philosophies. In 2019, SAFE hoped to continue promoting two specific facets of sustainable agriculture, **permaculture** and **stock-free organic farming**.

Permaculture is a holistic approach recreating the complexity of an ecosystem while removing motorization from crops and gathering several plant varieties with complementary properties in the smallest possible area. Permaculture reduces the pressure of farming activities on lands and increases fertility, reinforcing sustainability in farming and food production, eliminating chemical input to recreate biodiversity and reducing fossil fuels.

Stock-free organic farming is a system of cultivation that views farms as part of the wider eco-system and excludes artificial chemicals ('agrochemicals': 'pesticides', 'herbicides', 'chemical fertilizers'), as well as livestock manures, animal remains from slaughterhouses, genetically modified material and anything of animal origin.

SAFE's Advocacy and awareness-raising actions for Permaculture in 2019

Advocacy

Following the positive experience of 2018 and in collaboration with its partners, SAFE continued to build its current network of associations active in permacultural agriculture. To properly assess the work achieved in 2018 in the field of permaculture, we organised an International Video Conference with the **Working Group on Permacultural Agriculture** on 16 January 2019, composed of SAFE's experts Anna Bartoli and Paolo Rosazza Prin (Accademia Italiana di Permacultura, Italy), Claudiu Dobos (Institutul de Cercetare în Permacultură din România, Romania), Régis Close (PermaWET, Belgium) and Primož Turnšek (Društvo za Permakulturo Slovenije, Slovenia). Unfortunately, Régis Close and Primož Turnšek were not able to join the meeting but provided comments to SAFE prior to the video conference. Analyses were subsequently conducted with each OHD partner throughout the entire year in informal calls: strengths and weaknesses of these campaigns were highlighted in order to come up with significant and more relevant awareness-raising materials and policy-oriented

arguments in the future. In particular, it was determined that OHDs in 2018, and subsequently in 2019, have shown that there is a large consumer engagement around this topic but that farmers cannot be easily attracted; future awareness-raising activities should therefore focus more on intensive adult education at a higher level over longer periods of time in order to really involve professionals in agriculture and train future agriculture practitioners. An Erasmus+ project was specifically presented to tackle this issue.

In the first months of 2019, thanks to its work in 2018 and to the existing network of SAFE's member *Accademia Italiana di Permacultura*, SAFE enlarged its contact list in the field of permacultural agriculture in 2019: contacts were made to include additional partners to organize OHDs and to extend the range of expert partners in the Working Group on Permacultural Agriculture. Notably, SAFE had calls with Dr. Angela Polkey (certified permaculture teacher at Aberystwyth University, United Kingdom) and Finn Weddle (Coordinator of the Scotland Branch of the Permaculture Association UK). These calls highlighted the need for more in-depth training of farmers, but also showed that permaculture courses could apply to a wide range of disciplines (including Economics, Philosophy, Medicine, Agricultural Studies, etc.).

In this regard, several university professors and lecturers in Phytopathology/Organic Agriculture/Social Agriculture (from 4 different member states) were invited and joined the Working Group to strengthen scientific arguments and add to discussions about applied permaculture principles: Dr. Censu Caruana (Università ta' Malta, Malta), Dr. Paolo Guarnaccia and Dr. Ferdinando Branca (Università degli Studi di Catania, Italy), Dr. Haissam Jijakli (Université de Liège, Belgium), Dr. Liliana Badulescu and Dr. Viorica Lagunovschi-Luchian (University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, Romania).

Awareness-raising

Building on the success of the Open House Days (OHDs) organized in 2018, SAFE completed the organization of four new OHDs in different permaculture farms located in three of its partners' home countries (Belgium, Italy and Malta). Every event was successful in terms of the quality of lectures and activities, as SAFE assessed from its partners' reports and feedbacks. In total, SAFE and its partners presented permaculture and its principles and techniques to approximately 416 persons. Many of the participants were regular consumers who discovered permaculture and sustainable farming through farm tours led by certified instructors. Even though very few of them were actually farmers, the number of attendees of each session was significant, suggesting a growth in popularity of permaculture amongst the general public and illustrating once again the EU citizens' desire for a

shift towards more sustainable food and farming systems. Although SAFE and its partners primarily decided to narrow down their events to 50 people, larger groups of attendees could be included without any quality loss.

Thanks to its work in 2018 and to its already established network, SAFE also enlarged its contact list in the field of permacultural agriculture in 2019: contacts were made to include additional partners to organize the 2019 OHDs and to extend the range of expert partners in the Working Group on Permacultural Agriculture. Several calls with SAFE's new expert partners subsequently highlighted the need for more in-depth training of farmers, but also showed that permaculture courses could apply to a wide range of disciplines (including Economics, Philosophy, Medicine, Agricultural Studies, etc.). In this regard, several university professors and lecturers in Phytopathology/Organic Agriculture/Social Agriculture were invited and joined the Working Group to strengthen scientific arguments and add to discussions about applied permaculture principles:

- Dr. Censu Caruana (Università ta' Malta, Malta),
- Dr. Paolo Guarnaccia and Dr. Ferdinando Branca (Università degli Studi di Catania, Italy),
- Dr. Haissam Jijakli (Université de Liège, Belgium),
- Dr. Liliana Badulescu and Dr. Viorica Lagunovschi-Luchian (University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest, Romania).

SAFE's Advocacy and awareness raising actions for Stock-free Organic Framing in 2019

Advocacy

In 2019, SAFE and its partners focused the activities of their Working Group on Stock-Free Organic Farming on shaping its strategic position within the policy groups SAFE is a part of. To strengthen its messages and bring in more and more contributions to the topic of stock-free organic farming, the **Working Group on Agro-ecological Stock-Free Organic Farming** created by SAFE in 2018 extended its network and was enlarged to new members and partners, namely Laura Serpilli (Editorial Director, VeganOK, Italy), Tamara Schiopu (Vegan Organic Network, UK), Hélène Modrzejewski (Vegan France, France), Louise Davies (Head of Campaigns, Policy & Research, The Vegan Society, UK) and Timothy Thorpe (Campaigns and policy officer, the Vegan society, UK). Several meetings of the Working Group were organised:

- The first meeting of the Working Group on Agro-ecological Stock-Free Organic Farming took place on Skype on 16 January 2019. Each expert representative of SAFE's member

associations (Förderkreis Biozyklisch-Veganer Anbau, Végétik, SONVE, BNS Biocyclic Network Ltd.) provided opinions on the work done under the Common Agricultural Policy. Partners highlighted the need to come together to advocate for sustainable farming practices not only within national legislations but also at EU level.

- A second meeting of the Working Group took place in Brussels on 4 April 2019. Partners discussed their plans and ideas for the next LIFE proposal (2020-2021) and detailed their comments about the awareness-raising and advocacy activities held in 2018 and beginning of 2019. Additional members of the Working Group (the Vegan Society, VeganOK, Vegan France, Vegan Organic Network) joined at that stage. Partners decided to organise an International Conference to promote stock-free organic farming at EU level in 2020. To encompass more realities and allow SAFE's partners in permaculture to join the group in the future, partners renamed the Working Group 'Working Group on Stock-Free Organic Farming and Sustainable Agriculture'.
- A third meeting was held on Skype on 23 May 2019. The plan to organise a conference was detailed; in particular, partners found a title (*'Grow Green – The role of plant-based and organic in building a sustainable food and farming system'*) and created a first list of invitees and key speakers.
- A fourth meeting was held in Brussels on 28 November 2019. SAFE was glad to announce that its proposal for LIFE 2020-2021 was approved and partners started to discuss practical details related to the organization of the aforementioned International Conference (invitees, programme, venues, dates, etc.).

[Awareness-raising](#)

Phase 1 – Farmer-to-farmer trainings

Following the positive experience of 2018 and in collaboration with its partners, SAFE continued to build its current network of associations active in stock-free organic farming. To properly assess the work achieved in 2018 in this field, we organised an International Video Conference with the Working Group on Stock-Free Organic on 16 January 2019, composed of SAFE's experts Axel Anders and Anja Bonzheim (Förderkreis Biozyklisch-Veganer Anbau, Germany), Johannes Eisenbach (BNS Biocyclic Network Services Ltd., Cyprus/Greece), Elodie d'Halluweyn (Végétik, Belgium), Sabina Bietolini (SONVE, Italy).

During this meeting, partners had the opportunity to provide further feedback on the events they co-organized with SAFE in their respective countries in 2018. The organisation of new seminars for 2019

was also decided and new partners were added to the working group to add more diversity to our panel of partners.

Together with its partners, SAFE organized 3 trainings on Stock-free organic farming in 2 different EU member states in 2019. The first farmer-to-farmer training sessions was held in February 2019 and the last one in September 2019. Every event was successful in terms of the quality of lectures and activities, as SAFE could assess from its partners' reports and feedback. Particularly, we would like to highlight the quality of speakers (notably Dr. Helen Harwatt) who gave these seminars a deeper dimension. This largely made up for the limited audience. In total, 61 people benefited from these farmer-to-farmer trainings, but as these were more intensive, science-oriented and detailed, we could see a significant improvement in the quality of lectures and discussions.

As regards countries involved, SAFE chose to favour countries where similar seminars were not organised in 2018. Building from its own network, SAFE therefore supported two seminars in two different locations in Germany and one seminar in the United Kingdom. SAFE acknowledges that one additional seminar would have been necessary to meet this year's objective, but the overall enhanced quality of lectures, farm tours and content still contributed to make this awareness-raising campaign successful in 2019.

Phase 2 – Project assessment and evaluation

On 28 November 2019, the Working Group on Stock-Free Organic Farming met in Brussels to assess the work done in the past two years within the LIFE programme. Partners phrased hopes and concerns; one big argument which was highlighted during the farmer-to-farmer seminars was the difficulty to attract farmers at a large scale. Among the list of problems preventing farmers from joining a broader movement of stock-free organic farmers, it was determined that the current legislative status of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) plays a key role. It was observed that farmers' main concerns rarely relate to agricultural sustainability but rather to their actual economic situation, which could only be supported through existing European and national tools such as the CAP and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD). One conclusion that emerged from the meetings of the Working Group was that there is a need for deeper legislative changes to integrate stock-free organic farming into policies and that future awareness-raising actions should therefore target policy-makers rather than consumers/farmers. SAFE took measures to propose activities more relevant to that aim in its next LIFE proposal for 2020 and 2021.

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