

To: European Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski
CC: European Commissioner Stella Kyriakides

Brussels, 29 September 2020

Dear Commissioner Wojciechowski,

In anticipation of the upcoming reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the development of new EU frameworks to attain sustainable food systems, **the undersigned organisations urge you to develop tools to promote legumes within EU agricultural policies.**

With the European Green Deal, the European Commission emphasised the important climate and environmental challenges that we face today, and reaffirmed its commitment to tackle them. The ongoing reform of the CAP, together with the recent publication of the 'Farm to Fork' strategy¹, offer ways to turn these challenges into opportunities.

Back in 2017, the EC Communication on 'The Future of Food and Farming' was already calling for easier access to '*products such as fruits and vegetables for EU consumers*'². More recently, The Farm to Fork Strategy has underlined the great need for a change in EU food consumption patterns, suggesting a move towards plant-based diets comprised of more whole-grain cereals, fruits, vegetables, legumes and nuts.

To produce the same amount of protein, legumes require less land, less water, lower pesticide and herbicide inputs, and lead to lower greenhouse gas emissions than animal derived sources^{3,4}. European diets also fall well below optimal level of intake for legumes⁵, and higher intake of legumes has been linked to lower mortality rates⁶.

For these reasons, encouraging the production and consumption of legumes and other high protein plant crops such as linseed and quinoa must indeed be a high priority and would be a significant step in meeting EU public health, climate, social and environmental responsibilities.

Enabling more sustainable diets in the EU will require information, education, and access to nutritionally adequate foods; especially high-protein crops such as legumes. These positive dietary changes should be supported by changes in agricultural production to ensure an adequate supply of high proteins crops. This presents opportunities for the agriculture sector, but a commitment from the CAP and further policy initiatives to support growth in this area will be crucial.

¹ [A Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, COM/2020/381](#)

² [The Future of Food and Farming, COM/2017/0713](#)

³ Santo RE, Kim BF, Goldman SE, et al. (2020). Considering Plant-Based Meat Substitutes and Cell-Based Meats: A Public Health and Food Systems Perspective. *Front. Sustain. Food Syst.* 4:134.

⁴ Poore J, Nemecek T (2018). Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. *Science.* 360: 6392, pp. 987-992.

⁵ Afshin A., Sur PJ, Fay KA, et al. (2019). Health effects of dietary risks in 195 countries, 1990–2017: A systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2017. *The Lancet.* 393:10184, pp. 1958-1972.

⁶ Schwingshackl L, Schwedhelm C, Hoffmann G, et al. (2017). Food groups and risk of all-cause mortality: a systematic review and meta-analysis of prospective studies. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition.* 105:6, pp. 1462–1473.

We therefore urge you to create mechanisms to bring about change in food and farming. This can only be achieved through:

- 1) **Increased support for farmers growing legumes and other high-protein plant crops for human consumption** in the CAP Strategic Plans. With the CAP reform still ongoing, the Commission can adjust CAP Strategic Plans Regulation and include an explicit reference to it in its Annexes;
- 2) Giving a **greater role to nutrition in agricultural policy-making**. The CAP specific instruments can be used to strengthen supply chains for high-protein plant-based products and promote health and nutrition-oriented business models. The upcoming action points⁷ foreseen by the Farm to Fork Strategy offer opportunities to do so;
- 3) In the longer term, **building sustainable food systems** which aim at achieving all climate objectives of the EC proposal for a European Climate Law⁸. Measures to support this can include promotion campaigns and green public procurement initiatives that specify the serving of a certain portion of plant-based protein per week at social food services, and the promotion of high-protein crops for human consumption in the future legislative proposal for a framework for a sustainable food system, due to be published in 2023⁹.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to an opportunity to have future meetings with your cabinet to discuss these asks.

Yours sincerely,



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⁷ For instance, action points 3 and 24 in the Annex of the Farm to Fork Strategy, expected at the end of the year 2020.

⁸ [Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and the Council establishing the framework for achieving climate neutrality, 2020/0036 \(COD\)](#)

⁹ Action point 1 in the Annex of the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Signatories:

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