



EU ELECTIONS 2024 MANIFESTO

STRENGTHENING FOOD SAFETY, SUSTAINABILITY,
AND INCLUSION FOR EUROPEAN CONSUMERS

HEALTH

ENVIRONMENT

INCLUSION

Safe Food Advocacy Europe - SAFE, as an umbrella organisation committed to fostering healthy, environmentally sustainable, and inclusive food systems, is calling on **policymakers from all EU institutions** to ensure that **consumers' health and concerns remain at the core of the future EU food legislations**. Together with its members from across the European Union, SAFE has identified **10 key priorities** that need to be addressed and drive future EU food policies following a **horizontal and multistakeholder approach**.

1) NO MISLEADING LABELLING FOR CONSUMERS

Consumers must be empowered to make informed choices. It is essential to provide them with accurate information, whilst also ensuring that labels are clear and easy to understand and do not encourage behaviours that could be harmful to their health.

SAFE is calling for larger font sizes to be used on packaging, for both packaged and bulk ingredients. Additives should be clearly labelled with their full name, rather than acronyms and synonyms. Labels must not include claims that might promote unhealthy ultra-processed food. The origin of ingredients needs to be clear, even in multi-sourced foods.

2) CLEAR DISTINCTION BETWEEN NATURAL AND SYNTHETIC INGREDIENTS IN FOOD

Consumers are often misled on information concerning the properties of food products, especially when it comes to the origin of ingredients therein. It is necessary that labels differentiate when the ingredients in a product are of natural or synthetic origin. Importantly, products using synthetic ingredients should not bear claims about properties that do not belong to them, like "all natural".

SAFE is calling for the mandatory differentiation of natural and synthetic ingredients in food products labels. In addition, EU legislation should ban the use of the term "natural" on products that are produced using chemical synthesis, process synthesis, or genetic engineering.

3) HEALTHIER FOOD ENVIRONMENTS FOR ALL

Unhealthy food environments contribute to dysmetabolic diseases in children and adolescents. In particular, on-shelf marketing strategies used by retailers to promote the purchase of high-fat, high-sugar, high-salt, and ultra-processed products lead to an increase in NCDs (such as diabetes and cardio-vascular diseases) and other food-related diseases like obesity.

The notion of 'food environments' refers to the physical, economic, political, and socio-cultural contexts in which people engage with the food system to make decisions about acquiring, preparing, and consuming food. SAFE calls for stricter regulations on the marketing of food products, both on shelves and online, prohibiting the promotion of high-fat, sugar, and salt (HFSS) products to vulnerable individuals such as children and adolescents. SAFE also recommends reducing unnecessary amounts of sugar, salt, and fat in food, without resorting to synthetic or chemical alternatives or engaging in ultra-processing practices. Furthermore, SAFE requests that obesity be recognised as a disease so that patients can be earlier diagnosed and better supported.

4) IMPLEMENTING THE HIGHEST EU SAFETY STANDARDS

Food contaminants are substances that may pose a high health risk to consumers. Consumers are often unaware of the presence of these substances in common food products. Regrettably, risk assessments for these contaminants are often only based on insufficient data, mostly provided by the product manufacturers themselves.

SAFE asks for a harmonised and strengthened EU safety control system for both food and feed products across the EU Member States, thereby enhancing the protection of human, animal, and environmental health. SAFE calls for the identification of new drivers of soil and water contamination, such as micro- and nano-plastics that are already present in soil and water, pesticides, and antibiotics.

5) IMPROVING RISK ASSESSMENTS FOR NOVEL FOODS AND FOOD ADDITIVES

The safety of novel foods and additives first needs to be assessed by regulators before being authorised on the EU market. However, risk assessments of novel foods and food additives often rely extensively on data provided by their manufacturers, thereby impacting assessments.

SAFE demands that the lack of sufficient, complete, and independent data is grounds for the application of the precautionary principle, justifying the withdrawal or non-granting of authorisation for the novel food or additive to enter the EU market.

6) FOSTERING FOOD INCLUSION

Consumers' purchasing power is often reduced, affecting their ability to purchase fresh and healthy food. Trade policies that do not reduce the final cost of food products, even when production cost has decreased, must be considered an unfair practice.

SAFE calls for the protection of consumers' purchasing power, enabling them to buy fresh and healthy food. It is paramount to combat unfair pricing practices that harm consumers. If the price of a food product has risen as a result of increases in raw material prices or production costs, it must be ensured that when such costs subsequently drop or normalise, final product prices are also adjusted.

7) IMPROVING THE FIGHT AGAINST FLW AND PROMOTING EFFECTIVE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES TO SUPPORT CONSUMERS IN REDUCING FOOD WASTE

Consumers have a key role in reducing food waste in households. However, the important role of economic actors in the food supply chain (retailers, food services, manufacturers) cannot be overlooked. Purchase environments fostering better shopping habits, clearer date-marking and meal planning would contribute to the reduction of waste.

SAFE calls for a wider promotion of all good practices that contribute to reducing food waste by supporting consumers to adopt sustainable purchasing and consumption behaviours to save food fit for human consumption. In particular, European cities should mandatorily implement measures to prevent, or in last resort valorise, household food waste. Moreover, Member States and the European Commission should nudge consumers to reduce food waste by promoting the creation and dissemination of training courses (e.g. at school, in the workplace) for consumers about the re-use of leftovers and the use of relevant portion sizes. All Member States should adopt legislative tools efficiently favouring food donations, i.e., by drawing out measures that ease the economic, liability or logistical burden on food operators (including charity organisations), without putting human health at risk.

8) BUILDING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Food systems are intricate systems that bear complexity and must be dealt with careful consideration for all its components. Nonetheless, building sustainability on the social, environmental and health aspects of food systems is paramount and urgent. The impact of sustainable food systems must be examined by looking at both the origin of food products and the very way in which they are produced. Effective sustainability entails, among other things, food systems where food production and consumption do not lead to pollution or undignified working and living conditions.

SAFE calls for policy actions and enforcement mechanisms to ensure and strengthen the sustainability of food systems and bring the EU's food trade policy within a socially and environmentally safe operating space. This includes considerations for the energy and the equipment used to produce, transport, process, transform and store food, to protect biodiversity, avoid the pollution of the environment as a whole, and safeguard the dignity of the people at all stages of the food chain.

9) ENHANCING ANIMAL WELFARE STANDARDS

Although the revision of the animal welfare legislation might pose a challenge for the EU, it will be a crucial step towards the protection of the life-long welfare of animals.

SAFE urges for the revision of rules on animal transport, slaughter practices, and housing conditions, emphasizing the importance of better living conditions for farmed animals, adequate space, clean water, nutritious food, and strict enforcement of animal welfare standards. The new legislation must include measures to enhance animal welfare standards, and Member States should integrate monitoring as part of their annual and extraordinary food safety control plans.

10) IMPROVING INFORMATION RELATED TO SUITABILITY OF FOOD

Consumers with specific dietary needs may seek food products that have not yet been regulated by the European Union, which can pose a health risk to them. For instance, many consumers with allergies to animal proteins consume/request vegan or vegetarian products. The absence of European rules defining these products has also resulted in severe cases of anaphylactic shock and even fatalities among these consumers.

SAFE is calling for a clear and harmonised EU definition of vegetarian and vegan products.



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