

Engaging health organisations in European food and agricultural policies

Results from three surveys

The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA), in cooperation with the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), is engaged in a long-term process aimed at enhancing the participation of health organisations in the design and implementation of European Union (EU) food and agricultural policies. This both at national and European levels.

As a first step in the process a number of surveys have been conducted to better understand the levels of awareness of health actors on EU food policies, to assess the attitudes and degree to which health organisations from EPHA's membership have positions on food and agricultural policies, and to scope the needs of non-health organisations for cooperation with health actors.

This document describes the key lessons from three surveys:

- **Survey 1:** Sampling the awareness of health actors about new opportunities for health in European food and agricultural policies;
- **Survey 2:** Analysing the the attitudes and positions of EPHA membership on different topics covered by the Farm to Fork Strategy;
- **Survey 3:** Scoping in which areas national, non-health actors working on food and agricultural policy reform could benefit from additional public health insights to inform their activities.

The outcomes of these surveys will serve as input for further strategy building on pathways to empower the involvement of health organisations in food policy-making.

Survey 1: Do you know about the new opportunities for health in EU food and agricultural policies?

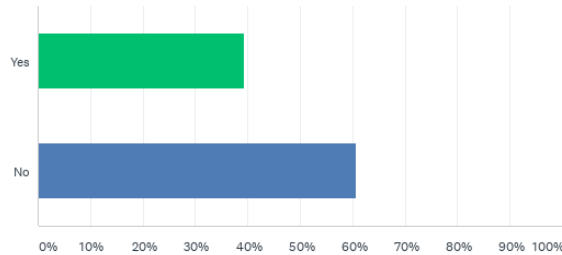
This [survey](#) for a broad health audience, open between February and April 2020, aimed to map the extent to which national actors in public health are aware of the Farm to Fork Strategy and the new opportunities for health under the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The survey collected over 50 responses from 17 EU countries and the UK. Respondents were contacted through EPHA and EUPHA mailing lists.

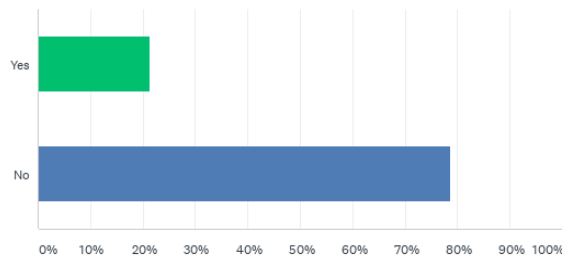
It showed that:

- Over 80% of respondents were not aware that each EU government has to prepare a national CAP implementation plan, which should include actions on food and health as part of a new health objective.
- Over 80% of respondents were not aware that health organisations would have to be consulted as part of the preparation of each national CAP implementation plan.
- Hardly any respondent has been involved in the preparation of national CAP Strategic Plans.
- Only 40% of respondents knew about the (at the time of the survey) upcoming publication of the EU Farm to Fork Strategy.
- Among the respondents indicating they are public authorities, no single respondent was contacted or knew anyone from other health departments that was contacted to be involved in the preparation of national CAP Strategic Plans. This while nearly 80% of these respondents believed they should be invited to contribute.

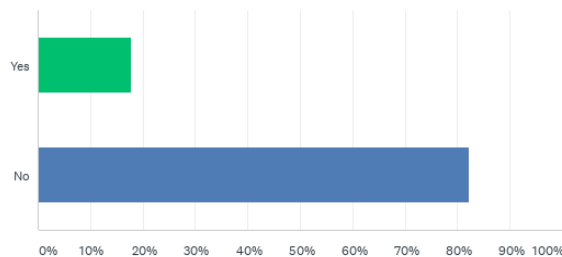
Q6 Did you know that in Spring 2020 the EU will publish the “Farm to Fork” Strategy for sustainable food with the aim to design a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system, and which should help guide national food and agricultural policies?



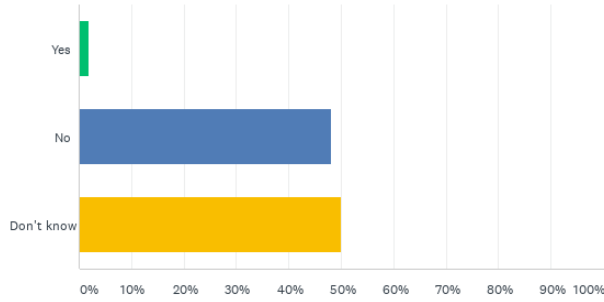
Q1 Did you know that with the revision of the EU Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) each EU government has to prepare a national CAP implementation plan, which should include actions on food and health as part of a new health objective?



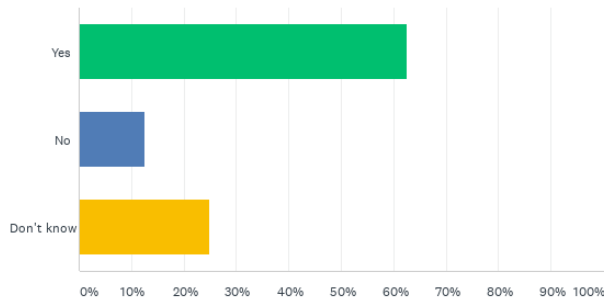
Q2 Did you know that health organisations have to be consulted as part of the preparation of each national CAP implementation plan?



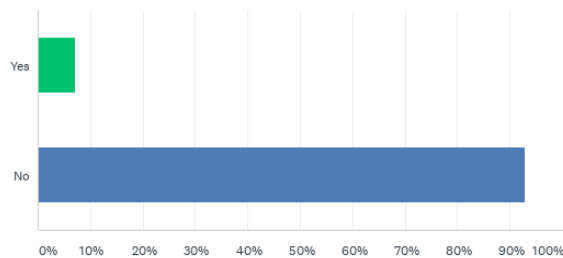
Q3 Has your organisation been consulted or asked to carry out any analysis as part of the preparation of a national CAP implementation plan?



Q4 Do you consider that your organisation should be invited to participate in the preparation of a national CAP implementation plan (e.g. for reasons of your expertise, your representational status or other reason)?



Q5 Do you know of any other organisations that have been consulted or contacted to participate in the preparation of a national CAP implementation plan?



Survey 2: EPHA members' survey on food policy

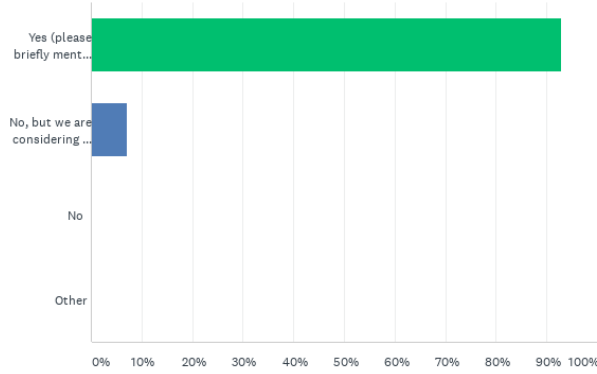
This [survey](#), open from October to November 2020, served to better understand EPHA members' attitudes and positions towards the Farm to Fork Strategy and wider questions of food policy. The survey serves as a direction and mandate for EPHA's future engagement on food policy questions, but also as an overview of the depth of members' current engagement in the area.

15 members contributed to this quite detailed and extensive survey.

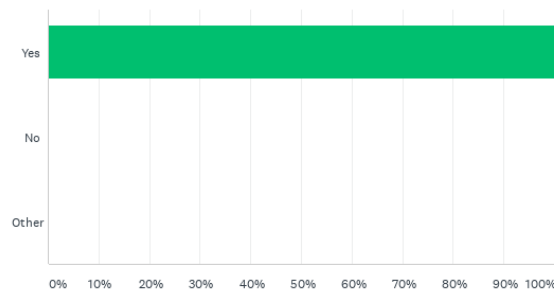
It showed that:

- The vast majority of EPHA members that pursue priorities in the area of food policy are aligned on some of the 'big themes' running across the debate on food systems and health. These include the need to frame the links between food and health from a wider perspective than nutrition only, supporting the transition towards sustainable healthy diets with 'less and better' meat and other animal products, on the importance of the 'food environments' framing and on some of the priority public health food policies to pursue, namely marketing restrictions (EU-level), fiscal policies (national level), public food procurement (local level) and trade policy (global level).
- Most positions by members relate to the 'consumption' side of the food systems debate and they differ in terms of levels of precision.
- Members are willing to give EPHA a mandate to pursue wider food systems themes, including in relation to agriculture, where members have no strong positions themselves.
- There are limited divergences in approaches to some specific themes such as front-of-pack labelling and the role ultra-processed foods should have in food policy.
- There are some nuances on the question of which role alcohol should play in the sustainable food systems debate.

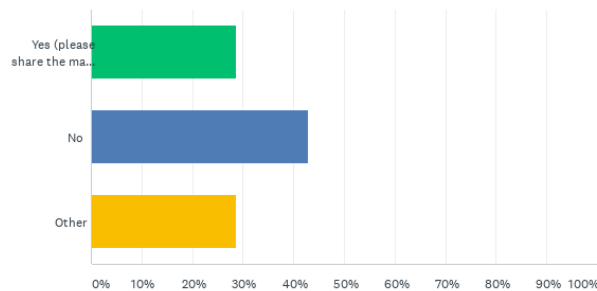
Q3 Does your organisation pursue priorities on food-health related topics?



Q11 Should EPHA continue to frame and refine the links between food and health from a 'food systems' perspective, with a primary focus on nutrition, but also encompassing wider concepts of 'planetary health' and 'one health'?

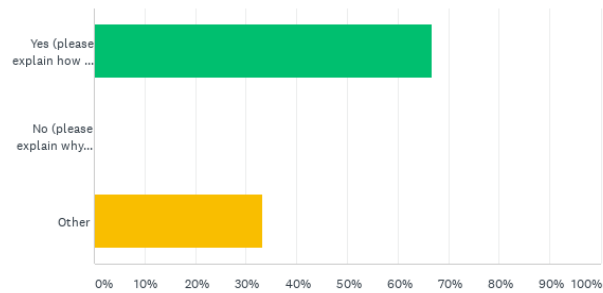


Q12 Does your organisation have explicit positions that relate to the health impacts of food production? (this can include any aspects related to agriculture, incl. pesticides use, air quality, antibiotics use etc.)

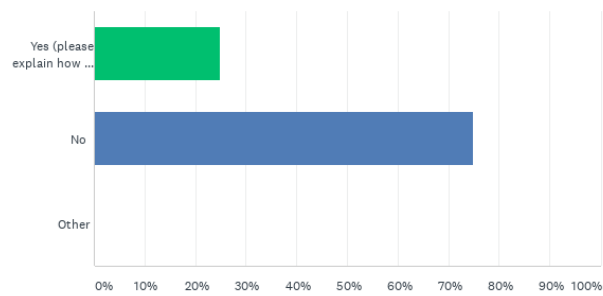




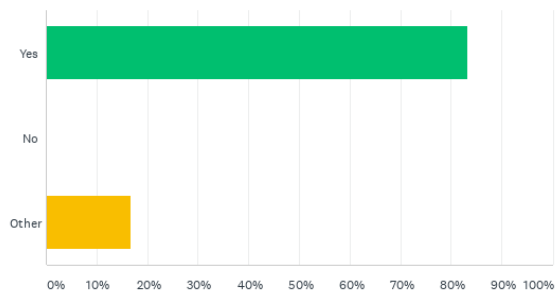
Q15 As part of your organisation's approach to healthy diets, do you explicitly support a reduction in meat and/or other animal product consumption?



Q16 If 'yes' to the previous question: does your position distinguish between different animal production methods?



Q17 Do you agree for EPHA to base its approach to farm animal products on such a 'less and better' vision?



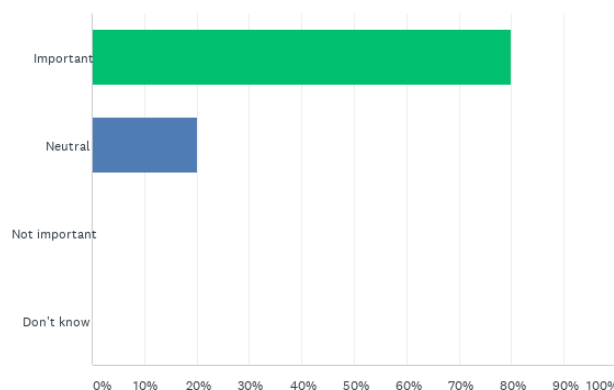
Survey 3: Survey for existing national food and agricultural policy coalitions in five EU member states – what are the needs in relation to health?

This [survey](#), open in June 2020, served to better understand the approach and needs of five national civil society coalitions in Germany, Italy, Spain, Belgium and Poland with regard to addressing the ‘food and health’ objective under the CAP and wider food policy questions, with special reference to health needs.

It showed that:

- 4 out of 5 coalitions considered it important to have an articulate health dimension to their work.
- There is weak structural cooperation between existing food and farming coalitions and health organisations. Despite this, the desire to have more interaction with health organisations was voiced.
- 4 out of 5 respondents feel they need additional support to enhance the strategic use of health arguments and concepts in their advocacy. Explicitly articulated needs focused especially on questions of nutrition and on building a wider understanding of how national campaigns around food and agricultural can be framed with the help of public health concepts.

Q6 With a view on your coalition's engagement in the CAP and wider food policy, do you feel it is important to have an articulate health dimension to your work?





Q3 What types of organisations does your coalition work with? (especially with a view on the themes covered by CAP Objective 9, and/or wider food policy questions)

