

Europe in crisis needs a health-oriented food policy

Last chance to put the interests of people and planet first

Brussels, 21 June 2022. In the face of multiple converging crises, from rising food prices, to obesity, to accelerating climate change, Europe must throw its **regulatory weight behind an ambitious and equitable reform of the food system**. A public health vision centred on the **health of people, planet, and animals**,* should lead this transition, argues the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) in its new position paper.

A **health-oriented approach** to food systems change can bring many significant benefits:

- A food system designed around healthy eating can achieve **food security within planetary boundaries** and a more effective use of land;
- A food system based on health equity will ensure dignity and **well-being for consumers, producers and workers** alike;
- A food system that recognises that human health and well-being is dependent on the health of the planet will prioritise tackling the **climate and biodiversity emergencies**;
- A food system focused on the health and welfare of animals will support a transition to **sustainable animal farming** with its many societal co-benefits;
- A food system that strives to fulfil people's right to food and health can contribute to a people-centred society that puts the **public interest first** before commercial imperatives.

To achieve this vision, the paper proposes a package of **policy recommendations** to create **food environments** that make the healthy and sustainable food choice the default and most desirable choice, thereby enabling healthy eating for all and allowing to fulfil people's aspirations for a sustainable future.

Recommended policies include **regulatory standards** for food composition and production – to ensure foods on the market are maximally sustainable; **pricing policies** – to ensure relative food prices support the uptake of sustainable healthy diets; **marketing restrictions** – to ensure the promotion of foods associated with unhealthy, unsustainable diets is minimised; and **public procurement criteria** – to ensure public money supports sustainable food systems.

* See the One Health principle, which [recognises](#) how the health of people, environment and animals are interconnected.

[SIGN UP TO OUR MEDIA DISTRIBUTION LIST](#)

Further recommendations focus on the importance of **social policies**, **'nutrition-sensitive' agriculture**, tackling the **commercial determinants** of unhealthy diets, and creating a new social contract on the production and consumption of **animal foods**.

Europe's current food system generates **profound risks for health and the environment**. But for too long has the responsibility for change been put on people, rather than regulators and agri-food industries. In its paper, EPHA emphasises how **Europe's sustainable food systems law**, a major initiative to be proposed in 2023, is the best, and maybe last, chance to timely advance a sustainable transition.

Dr Milka Sokolović, Director General, European Public Health Alliance:

"As war takes over the headlines and the still ongoing pandemic becomes yesterday's news, one global health crisis overtakes another. In this multi-crisis hurricane, people must not be left to fend on their own. Even less should they be expected to change the food system, which is largely beyond individual control. It is time for public institutions to take responsibility and transform food environments for the common good. Europe's admirable food safety system did not emerge from good intentions alone, it was driven by strong and clear regulation. The same approach must be taken to make Europe's food system healthy and sustainable."

Publication details:

European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) Why Europe needs a health-oriented food policy.
EPHA Position paper on the EU Farm to Fork Strategy (2022)

Website: <https://epha.org/health-oriented-food-policy/>

Link to the paper: <https://bit.ly/3n28yHK>

Press contacts:

Nikolai Pushkarev (policy): nikolai.pushkarev@epha.org, +32 (0)4 86 83 08 66

Nicoleta Diaconu (communications): nicoleta.diaconu@epha.org, +32 (0) 474 32 19 18

[SIGN UP TO OUR MEDIA DISTRIBUTION LIST](#)