

# Transforming the European Agri-Food Sector

*A Declaration to transform the Agri-Food sector in Europe into a more competitive, sustainable and trusted sector, securing the production of safe, nutritious food that every consumer loves.*

Dear President Juncker,

The food supply chain is a key strategic sector in Europe from economical (6 % of Europe's GVA), labour (jobs for 24 million people) and cultural perspectives. This sector is also critical to meeting the societal challenges of sustainable farming, food security, food safety and healthy nutrition, now and in the future. These are important priorities for the European Commission and for the Member States and Regions. As key stakeholders in the agri-food sector, representing farmers, food producers, academia and other actors in the food industry, we recognize that our sector faces three major challenges. We need to:

- Win back the consumer: there is a severance of the mutual trust between consumers and producers. The sector needs to become consumer centric to regain this trust.
- Meet consumers' dietary needs and food preferences related to lifestyle and life stage, empowering them to lead healthier and more active lives.
- Future proof our farming and food production and distribution: about one third of the food produced is currently lost or wasted; the way we produce foods today will be less and less competitive and sustainable in the future. Climate change, land erosion and issues with securing a new generation of farmers will make it more difficult to produce the food we need.

It is urgent that we address these challenges and mitigate threats to public health, economic development, political stability and security in a holistic end-to-end manner. Acting on this, we have initiated several consortia (e.g. EIT-Food, FoodNexus, FoodForce, EFFoST, IUFoST) but the various initiatives underway are not adequately aligned and major areas like technological solutions are currently not addressed satisfactorily. Despite a good start it is absolutely clear we need to do more.

Therefore, we have now started an initiative to step change the transformation of the European agri-food sector.

Our vision is to create a broad, pan-European movement with the citizen at its heart. This movement will turn the variety in the sector into a strength and drive transformation by focusing on nutrition for healthy and sustainable diets, climate smart, circularity, digitalisation, animal welfare and resource efficiency. It will also be inclusive, gathering all the necessary actors, from start-ups and SMEs to large multinationals, from industry to academia, from farmers and manufacturers to consumers and societal organizations, from east to west, north to south, including all relevant sectors.

Our strategy is to connect and leverage all actors and initiatives and develop an integrated program coordinating both long-term research and short-term implementation, education, technology transfer and dissemination, thus contributing to achieving the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

We cannot do this alone. Therefore, we ask the European Commission's and Member States' support for this strategy through a comprehensive program in FP9, targeting technological solutions in food security, sustainable farming, food safety and healthy nutrition. With the recently completed Strategy of the European Technology Platform *Food for Life* for the food sector, built and supported by the major academic and industry actors in this sector, we are committed to actively work with the Commission to further shape and execute such a program and align all the current initiatives.

Only in this way we can revitalize the European agri-food sector, restore consumer trust, and make it fully sustainable and able to provide sufficient safe, healthy and affordable food for generations to come. Only in this way can Europe start leading the transformation of the food system that is so much needed worldwide.

On behalf of,



A blue ink signature of Prof. Dr. Lilia Ahrné.

Prof. Dr. Lilia Ahrné  
President



A blue ink signature of Dr. Ellen de Brabander.

Dr. Ellen de Brabander  
Interim CEO



A blue ink signature of Mr. Hubert Weber.

Mr. Hubert Weber  
President



A blue ink signature of Prof. Dr. Rob J. Hamer.

Prof. Dr. Rob J. Hamer  
President



A blue ink signature of Prof. Dr. Gert W. Meijer.

Prof. Dr. Gert W. Meijer  
Chair



A blue ink signature of Ms. Nanna Viereck.

Ms. Nanna Viereck  
Co-Chair

Enclosure: Endorsement letters

C.c.: First Vice-President Frans Timmermans  
Vice-President Jyrki Katainen  
Commissioner Carlos Moedas  
Commissioner Phil Hogan

## **About EFFoST**

The European Federation of Food Science and Technology (EFFoST) pushes the production of sustainable and healthy food by facilitating knowledge exchange. More than 130 societies, institutes and universities all over Europe are affiliated to EFFoST. [www.fffost.org](http://www.fffost.org)

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## **About EIT Food**

EIT Food is a European Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC), part of the EIT, which was set up to transform our food ecosystem. It is a consortium of 50 partners from leading businesses, research centres and universities across 13 countries. [www.eitfood.eu](http://www.eitfood.eu)

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## **About FoodDrinkEurope**

FoodDrinkEurope is the organization of Europe's food and drink industry, the largest manufacturing sector and leading employer in the EU and a key contributor to its economy (289 000 companies, 99% SMEs, 4.2 million employees). Its membership comprises 27 National Food and Drink Federations, 27 European Sector Associations and 21 large companies. [www.fooddrinkeurope.eu](http://www.fooddrinkeurope.eu)

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## **About Food Nexus**

FoodNexus is a business-led Consortium of multinational, cooperatives and SMEs in strong food regions of Europe, together with the world's best knowledge institutes in the area of food. Across disciplines, the FoodNexus partners unite to shape strategies and activities that are crucial for transforming the food system. [www.foodnexus.eu](http://www.foodnexus.eu)

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## **About ETP Food for Life**

The European Technology Platform (ETP) Food for Life is an industry-led, stakeholder forum aimed at driving innovation and uniting stakeholder communities within the food and drink sector. [etp.fooddrinkeurope.eu](http://etp.fooddrinkeurope.eu)

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## **About FOODforce**

FOODforce is a network of more than 30 leading European Universities and Research Organisations covering all of Europe and active in the areas of food production and processing linked to nutrition and health. It provides a proactive forum for discussions on delivery of best practice and societal impact and facilitates international aspects of knowledge exchange and innovation, both within and outside the European Union. [www.foodforce.org](http://www.foodforce.org)

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