



## **EXPERT GROUP ON GENERAL FOOD LAW AND SUSTAINABILITY OF FOOD SYSTEMS**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**12 JULY 2023, 14H30-16H30**

#### **1. WELCOME BY THE COMMISSION**

DG SANTE opened the third meeting of the expert group on general food law and sustainability of food systems and welcomed the participants,

#### **2. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR A SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM: PRESENTATION BY THE COMMISSION AND EXCHANGE OF VIEWS**

The Commission presented an outline of the initiative for a legislative Framework for a Union Sustainable Food System and presented indicative general definitions, objectives and principles. Furthermore, the Commission presented an overview of potential facilitating and supporting governance measures. The Commission closed the presentation with a state of play of the initiative, underlining that the proposal could potentially be expected in the autumn, with no specific date having been set yet.

The initial questions raised related to the scope of the initiative and the inclusion of the three dimensions of sustainability, including public health. The Commission explained that as a horizontal sustainability initiative, all three dimensions would be covered, with public health being included under the social dimension in an appropriate fashion with regards to the division of competences. One Member State (MS) asked what kind of legal instrument the Commission would opt for and another inquired about the legal basis. The Commission explained that the most probable and appropriate instrument would be a Regulation and further elaborated on the potential legal basis (several articles of the treaty could be used as legal basis given the broad scope of the initiative).

Several MS underlined that objectives and principles ensuring a high level of protection for public health and the environment are crucial. Certain aspects that should be included under the objectives, such as planetary boundaries and soil, were mentioned, as were existing legal principles such as the polluter pays. The Commission assured the MS that a high level of protection of the environment and public health was at the core of the initiative and also stated that food safety remains in the remit of the General Food Law and would not be compromised. There were exchanges on how specific aspects are covered under the different dimensions, in particular with regard to socio-economic elements relating to e.g. responsible business practices, innovation and SMEs. One MS stated that while culture was

important, it should not necessarily be seen as a general objective or on par with the three dimensions of sustainability in the legislative framework.

Two MS asked how food security was addressed within the framework, stressing the necessity of a holistic approach. The Commission confirmed that food security would most likely be incorporated as a general principle, taking into account the six pillars as multilaterally defined. As such, the initiative would support food security in an integrated way.

Several MS highlighted that transparency and equity are key concepts to accelerate the transition to sustainability. The Commission agreed, underlining that such elements should have a place in the policy enabling aspect of the proposal. One MS asked whether there would be any targets in the initiative or scope for potential targets, to which the Commission replied that there would be no quantitative targets. There was a general consensus that elements stemming from the framework should be evidence based and that the initiative should strengthen EU policy coherence.

A number of MS stressed that favourable food environments and harmonised elements related to sustainable and healthy food choices are important. One MS highlighted the governance measures related to food environments as an example. The Commission took note and underlined that certain enabling measures could be foreseen and are a part of the impact assessment, highlighting sustainability labelling as a specific example. A brief explanation followed on core elements of the sustainability labelling building block.