

Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices

Advisory group on sustainability of food systems
19 October 2022

DG SANTE - Farm to Fork

European Union



The EU Code of Conduct: objectives

- To stimulate the uptake of healthy and sustainable consumption patterns
- To foster further improvement of internal processes, operations and organization
- To facilitate the uptake of sustainable practices by all relevant actors in the food system

- → What can 'middle actors of the chain' already do now to pursue these objectives and accelerate the transition?



The EU Code of Conduct: Scope

- Focus on actions by actors of the 'middle of the food chain: food processors, food service operators and retailers
- Encourage **voluntary actions** which improve their sustainability performances with spill-over effects on both sides of the chain i.e. primary producers & consumers
- Address the **3 pillars**: environmental, economic and social sustainability;
- **Shift** the norm for food business culture **towards sustainability** whilst guaranteeing fair and transparent competition;
- Provide clarity and build additional **trust** among all food system actors;
- Involve all, especially **SMEs**; and
- Promote **front-runner** solutions.



The EU Code of Conduct: Process

- Co-design involving:
 - “Middle of the chain”: operators and associations
 - Primary producers: e.g. farmers and fisher associations
 - Consumer representatives
 - NGOs, experts and academia
 - EU Member States
- Takes into account existing work and existing legislation and policies
- Builds on best examples (e.g. industry codes, existing national and international work)



The EU Code of Conduct: Process

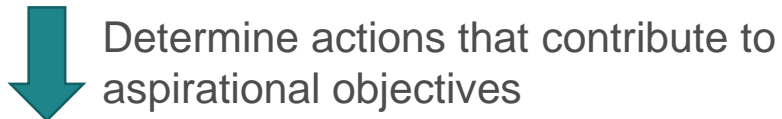
- Four different Task Forces set up:
 - Promote healthy and sustainable consumption patterns
 - Improve sustainability of internal processes in the middle of the chain
 - Improve sustainability of the food value chain
 - Cross-cutting: monitoring framework
- Parallel track with individual companies
- Result: two components
 - Aspirational objectives with concrete actions
 - Quantitative commitments by individual companies



Two components in Code of Conduct

Component 1 = general part Code

Aspirational objectives



- Specific actions that can be practically adopted by all actors
- Go beyond current legal obligations and existing voluntary codes
- Minimizing administrative burden esp for SMEs

Monitor adherence to code

Commission will monitor overall effect F2F (incl. Code)

Component 2 = specific part Code for individual companies

Selected targets + monitoring framework



Freedom for companies how to reach targets



Monitor progress (outcome)

Seven aspirational objectives:

- Stimulate **healthy, balanced and sustainable diets**
- Prevention and reduction of **food loss and waste**
- **Climate-neutral** food chain in Europe by 2050
- Optimised **circular and resource-efficient** food chain in Europe
- Sustained, **inclusive and sustainable economic growth**, employment and decent work for all
- Sustainable **value** creation in the European food supply chain through **partnership**
- Sustainable **sourcing** in food supply chains

Purpose of aspirational objectives

- Non-binding objectives
- Objectives will show for which themes change is needed, and how much;
- The actions included in the Code should be proportional to the aspirational objectives;
- Overall objectives, in many cases other policies and developments will contribute (for example climate policy, CAP, CFP etc)
- Objectives may help to build an intervention logic and show which actor can contribute
- Objectives will provide guidance for concrete commitments by individual companies (second component).
- Objectives are often thematic, actions might be more integrated (for example synergies between health and environment)
- Objectives will create link to monitoring
- Strive for limited number of objectives (but: food is complex)



Examples of aspirational objectives - Health

- Increase the consumption of whole-grain cereals, fruits and vegetables, nuts, pulses and fibres;
- Reduce the average caloric intake, especially that of people who are now overconsuming.
- Lower the consumption of fat, sugar and salt.
- The consumption of red and/or processed meat needs to be in line with recommendations. The ratio between animal-based and plant-based proteins should shift.
- Special attention is needed to prevent childhood obesity
- Adapting marketing and advertising strategies



Examples of aspirational objectives - Environment

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from EU food system in 2030, mainly by consumption side measures
- Reduce the environmental footprint food consumption also by mainly by consumption side measures;
- Improve biodiversity, sustainable use of natural capital
- Halving per capita food waste at retail and consumer levels by 2030 (SDG Target 12.3)
- Contribute to Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity strategy targets (reduction use and risk of pesticides and sales of antimicrobials; increase share of land under organic farming)



Examples of aspirational targets – social and economic

Contribute to:

- Ensuring a sustainable livelihood for producers
- Fairer economic returns in the supply chain
- Ensuring access to a sufficient supply of affordable food for citizens

Animal welfare:

- Improved animal welfare. Synergies with amongst others reduction of use of antimicrobials



What happened since the launch of the Code

The Code was officially launched on 5 July 2021, with 65 signatories at the time.

The Code was presented as one of the gamechangers at the UNFSS presummit in July 2021.

The Code has been steadily growing with **130 signatories today**.

The first signatories' meeting in December 2021, identified the following priority areas: climate change (the way to net zero), circular economy and packaging, food security and balanced diets.

On 26 September 2022, a workshop was held on climate change. On 14 November, a workshop on packaging is planned.

Outreach activities are ongoing to attract SMEs.



Evaluation of commitments

- The Collaborative Platform, that gathers the wide stakeholder community, will serve for companies and associations to present progress on their commitments (at least once a year)
- Annual reports by both associations and companies + feedback from stakeholders = basis for evaluation of progress
- 88 reports received so far (out of 103 due in 2022)
- First evaluation to take place by end of 2022, a second one by end of 2023

Study on “Commitments pledged under the EU Code of Conduct on responsible food business and marketing practices

The objective of the study is threefold:

- To get a proper understanding of **where signatories to the Code stand in terms of their contribution to the sustainability of the EU food system**, on the basis of the commitments analysed via the submitted reports. Analysis of the commitments will help understand to which extent the different areas are covered.

Objective of the Study (ctd)

- To conduct a literature review and do a **mapping of other EU and non-EU initiatives that measure the sustainability performance of food business operators** and their contribution to the sustainability of the food system. Such mapping will help identify potential gaps that need to be covered in a sustainable food system.
- To **prepare material that enables the Commission to effectively communicate on the state of play of the Code** at various points in time.

Resources: useful links

- Code of conduct for responsible Business and Marketing Practices: https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork/sustainable-food-processing-wholesale-retail-hospitality-and-food-services/code-conduct_en
- Farm to Fork Strategy: https://ec.europa.eu/food/farm2fork_en
- Towards a Sustainable Food System - The Group of Chief Scientific Advisors: <https://op.europa.eu/en/web/eu-law-and-publications/publication-detail/-/publication/ca8ffeda-99bb-11ea-aac4-01aa75ed71a1>
- European Green Deal: https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en

