



EU Code of Conduct for Responsible Food and Business Practices – FoodDrinkEurope activity report

June 2023

Executive summary

As one of Europe's largest manufacturing sectors and an integral link in the food chain, FoodDrinkEurope is committed to support the transition towards more sustainable and resilient food systems. We were honoured to chair the EU Task Force to develop the "[EU Code of Conduct for Responsible Food and Business Practices](#)" and to work together with a wide range of food chain representatives, environmental and health NGOs, trade unions, consumer groups, the European Commission and global organisations such as FAO, OECD and WHO, during the first half of 2021.

Since the publication of the Code in July 2021, FoodDrinkEurope has established a dedicated workstream to support the implementation of the Code through all of our departments.

Highlights of our activities include:

- Action Plan for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems: In June 2022, FoodDrinkEurope launched its [Action Plan](#) for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems with a range of activities to help food and drink businesses meet all aspirational objectives within the Code. In addition to supporting the objectives within the Code, our Action Plan has built in new targets to bring in more aspects of sustainable and resilient food systems, including food safety, food security and the continued viability of food businesses. In total we have 20 ongoing activities within the Action Plan.
- Commitments to the Code: Beyond FoodDrinkEurope's commitment towards implementing the Code's aspirations and objectives, we continue to promote the Code to our members and beyond. So far 15 member associations and 16 member companies have made concrete corporate and/or sector-specific commitments to the Code, with further commitments expected.
- Activities to support the Code: In order to strengthen the Code, FoodDrinkEurope launched its dedicated #FoodFuture dialogue project to engage with European stakeholders on how to deliver sustainable food systems. We also continue to promote the Code widely through our network and to advocate for its implementation.
- Signatories to the Code: FoodDrinkEurope signed the Code on behalf of its entire membership, covering a network of 27 European sector associations, 26 national food and drink federations and 25 global food and drink companies, committed to help meet the Code's aspirations and objectives.
- Chairmanship of the Signatories Group of the Code: FoodDrinkEurope continues its commitment following the launch of the Code to act as chairperson of the Signatories Group of the Code.

Please see below an overview of activities to support FoodDrinkEurope's signature of the Code.

1: How have you promoted and disseminated the Code?

FoodDrinkEurope has promoted the Code widely both to internal and external stakeholders.

Internal promotion:

- In October 2022, the FoodDrinkEurope Board approved a move to build the organisation's internal *Roadmap 2023-2029* around its Action Plan, which implements the Code. This ensures that all activities within FoodDrinkEurope are driving towards the aspirational objectives within the Code.
- In view of the above, all FoodDrinkEurope committees – Economic Affairs, Environment and Sustainability, Food Safety, Consumers and Health, Communications and Public Affairs – as well as many working groups, now have a dedicated Action Plan project to deliver on the Code. This ensures the Code objectives feature in all committee meetings.
- In addition, seven FoodDrinkEurope Board members have become *Action Plan Champions* to promote the activities to internal and external audiences. We have also established an informal Action Plan Steering Group to build further momentum behind the initiative.
- FoodDrinkEurope continues to support members to sign on to the Code, and maintain their commitment to it, through internal comms, events and meetings.

External promotion:

- In June 2022, [FoodDrinkEurope's annual event](#) was used to promote its Action Plan for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems. The event, attended by around 500 participants, focused on ideas to help meet the Code objectives around climate change, the circular economy and nutrition.
- FoodDrinkEurope has supported the translation of the Code into 14 official languages (on top of seven official languages provided by Copa-Cogeca), which are published on the European Commission's [website](#).
- FoodDrinkEurope has presented its Action Plan, in the context of the Code, at numerous public events and widely on social media. Including:
 - o LinkedIn articles ([here](#), [here](#))
 - o Website ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#))
 - o Twitter ([here](#))
- FoodDrinkEurope has showcased the Code and examples of commitments in our external #FoodFuture email to 8,000 Brussels stakeholders.
- We have also created a [dedicated section](#) on the FoodDrinkEurope website to showcase its members' sustainability initiatives in support of the Code.

2: How have you ensured members align their sustainability actions and/or business practices to the aspirational objectives and targets of the Code?

In July 2021, FoodDrinkEurope signed the Code on behalf of all members – 26 national federations, 27 European sector associations and 25 companies. Members are also encouraged to further disseminate the Code to their members.

As noted above, FoodDrinkEurope presented and promoted the Code in multiple meetings, including at Board level, as well as individually to associations and their members and to multinational companies at European and global level.

Beyond the commitment of our 78 members towards implementing the Code's aspirations and objectives, we have also seen 15 member associations and 16 member companies make concrete commitments to the Code, with more commitments expected.

At FoodDrinkEurope, we launched our Action Plan for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems to help the food and drink industry to implement the Code and deliver on sustainable food systems. Read more about this in section 3 below.

All FoodDrinkEurope committees have used the Action Plan to incorporate the Code into their work program.

3: Have you developed sector-specific tools and resources in support of this Code?

In June 2021, FoodDrinkEurope launched its #FoodFuture dialogue project to help deliver on the Code's objectives and aspirations to achieve more sustainable food systems.

The project started with a comprehensive listening and engagement exercise across Europe to discuss all aspects of food sustainability and to understand how FoodDrinkEurope can work with members and partners to develop tools and resources to deliver better environmental and social outcomes.

Overall, we engaged with more than 2,000 stakeholders directly and reached more than one million users online. Using the outcomes from the listening exercise, the second part of the #FoodFuture project has been to deliver an Action Plan for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems with guidance, research and partnerships to help the food and drink industry speed the transition to more sustainable food systems.

There are now 20 specific actions which fall into our Climate, Sustainable Packaging, Nutrition, Food Safety, Thriving Business, and Innovation Action Projects. Here are the current activities underway within each action project:

Climate Action Project

FoodDrinkEurope established its *Climate Action Project* to help food and drink businesses move to net zero emissions and tackle wider environmental challenges. The project takes a collaborative approach to develop partnerships to harness the power of the food chain to drive systemic change.

The Climate Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objectives 1, 2, 6 and 7.

Progress to date:

Net zero toolkit: First, FoodDrinkEurope commissioned a study by leading environmental consultancy Ricardo to develop recommendations and [a roadmap](#) to decarbonise the food and drink industry, specifically looking at scope 1 and 2 emissions. This was published in 2021.

FoodDrinkEurope has now developed a practical toolkit to help food and drink businesses, especially SME's, to plot their individual path towards net-zero.

Through 2023 and 2024, FoodDrinkEurope will be amplifying the toolkit to all food and drink businesses through a series of webinars and communications through its network and partnerships.

Food waste reduction toolkit: [Nearly 59 million tonnes of food in the EU are wasted every year](#), which equates to 131 kilograms per inhabitant and about €132 billion. About 70 percent of this waste comes from retail, foodservice and households. This comes at the expense of vast resources and energy and millions of people being undernourished. Simply put, food waste is bad for business.

FoodDrinkEurope will soon publish a practical toolkit to help food and drink businesses plot their individual path towards reducing and eliminating food losses and food waste. We are also working in partnership with the European food banks (FEBA) to update our joint guidelines to encourage businesses to support their local food banks.

Through 2023 and 2024, FoodDrinkEurope will be amplifying the toolkit and guidelines to all food and drink businesses through a series of webinars and communications through its network and partnerships.

Sustainable farming initiative: Given the food and drink manufacturing industry buys 70% of EU farm produce, as well as agricultural raw materials from around the world, FoodDrinkEurope has

established a sustainable farming initiative to work with farmer organisations, agronomists, research institutes, financial institutions and others to work towards more sustainable farming.

Over the past 12 months, FoodDrinkEurope has published a series of [thought leader articles](#) on regenerative agriculture, produced an educational [series of webinars](#) in partnership with regenerative agriculture experts Soil Capital, and communicated widely with One Planet Business for Biodiversity, [including this joint statement](#).

FoodDrinkEurope recently commissioned a study looking into the obstacles to scale and finance the transition to more sustainable and regenerative agricultural practices. We look forward to publishing this important work later in 2023.

SME Greener Planet Award: One of the best ways to inspire businesses to take effective action to tackle environmental challenges is to show them that it's not only possible, but also good for business.

FoodDrinkEurope has therefore established [The Foodies](#), a competition to recognise some of Europe's most sustainable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The Greener Planet Award is for an SME committed to reducing its environmental impact. The Foodies Awards will return in 2024!

In September 2022 the [Greener Planet Award was won by Flahavans](#) – an Irish SME that sources 70% of its energy needs from renewables.

In addition, FoodDrinkEurope continues to showcase [best practices](#) to inspire and guide the industry towards more sustainable food systems.

Climate conscious office: Recognising the importance to *walk the talk* FoodDrinkEurope has established a *Planet Action Team* within the office. We have developed a plan to reduce our carbon emissions, supported a cookstove project to prevent deforestation in Burkina Faso and invested into Soil Capital's carbon sequestration certification scheme, helping French farmers reduce their carbon emissions by 50-tons in 2022 – this is equivalent to the amount of carbon sequestered by 60 acres of forest in a year.

The Climate Action Project will continue to evolve with guidelines and training to help food and drink businesses tackle wider environmental challenges including deforestation and unsustainable sourcing.

Packaging Action Project

FoodDrinkEurope established its *Packaging Action Project* to help food and drink businesses help ensure all food and drink packaging is recyclable or re-usable by 2030. The project takes a collaborative approach to develop partnerships to harness the power of the food chain to drive systemic change.

The Sustainable Packaging Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objectives 2, 3, 4 and 6.

Progress to date:

Sustainable packaging toolkit: FoodDrinkEurope will soon publish a practical toolkit to help food and drink businesses use more sustainable packaging. Topics include the use of more recycled plastics, as well as improving sustainable packaging design, packaging waste collection and sorting, and supporting innovations for new, more sustainable packaging materials. The toolkit supports FoodDrinkEurope's commitment and membership of the [Circular Plastics Alliance](#).

Through 2023 and 2024, FoodDrinkEurope will be amplifying the toolkit to all food and drink businesses through a series of webinars and communications through its network and partnerships.

Product environmental footprint guidelines: As an important link to the circular economy and wider sustainability agenda, work on resource efficiency is also critical. FoodDrinkEurope has [published guidelines to help food and drink businesses use the EU product environmental footprint \(PEF\) methodology](#) to evaluate the environmental footprint of a product and provide product environmental information to consumers.

Inspire businesses through best practices on sustainable packaging: FoodDrinkEurope has developed an [industry action online tool](#) to showcase member activities on sustainable packaging. There are currently more than 50 examples – including how companies are working on new designs, developing new sustainable materials and improving recyclability – which are used to inspire and teach best practices to the wider industry.

Nutrition Action Project

FoodDrinkEurope established its *Nutrition Action Project* to help food and drink businesses meet targets on nutrition and healthier living. The project takes a collaborative approach to develop partnerships to harness the power of the food chain to drive systemic change.

The Nutrition Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objective 1.

Progress to date:

Reformulation and product innovation toolkit: FoodDrinkEurope has developed [guidelines on reformulation and product innovation](#) to help manufacturers, particularly SMEs, by providing insight on the aspects of product innovation and reformulation that may need to be considered when undertaking reformulation work or developing new innovative products.

Fibre and wholegrain toolkit: In addition to the reformulation guidance, above, FoodDrinkEurope will soon publish a guide for SMEs with examples and best practices on how to use fibre and wholegrain in product development, innovation and reformulation.

Portions toolkit: FoodDrinkEurope will soon publish new guidelines on portions to help manufacturers, particularly SMEs, understand how to develop portions and related communications.

Labelling guidelines: In 2023, FoodDrinkEurope published [updated guidelines on legibility of labelling](#) to help manufacturers to comply with the legal requirement to provide legible information on packs.

Digital labelling initiative: FoodDrinkEurope has commissioned a study to identify the opportunities to improve transparency and consumer information through digital labelling. We will publish recommendations and encourage open dialogue on the next steps later in 2023.

New Learning Zone: All of our nutrition and food safety guidelines are hosted in our new online Learning Zone. Through 2023 and 2024, FoodDrinkEurope will be amplifying the toolkits and guidelines to all food and drink businesses through a series of webinars and communications through its network and partnerships.

SME Healthier Living Award: FoodDrinkEurope has established [The Foodies](#), a competition to recognise some of Europe's most sustainable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The Healthier Living Award is for an SME committed to helping consumers access a healthy and balanced diet.

In September 2022 the [Healthier Living Award was won by Good4U](#) – an Irish SME that provides healthy snacks.

In addition, FoodDrinkEurope continues to showcase [best practices](#) to inspire and guide the industry towards more sustainable food systems.

Call to action on healthy lifestyles: In 2023, FoodDrinkEurope signed the '[call to action](#)' led by the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) and JOGG/Youth Health Community for a European plan to prevent non-communicable diseases and promote healthy lifestyles.

Food Safety Action Project

Food safety remains FoodDrinkEurope's number one priority. Food and drink cannot be healthy if it is not safe. EU food safety standards are among the highest in the world and FoodDrinkEurope will continue to provide businesses with guidance to ensure the protection of consumer health. We must ensure food safety while also seeking to enhance environmental protection and maintain the competitiveness of the sector.

The Food Safety Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objective 1.

Progress to date:

Food safety toolkit:

FoodDrinkEurope recently published new guidelines on [food allergen management](#) and [food safety culture](#), and continues to update and promote its guidance documents on reducing the occurrence of contaminants in food.

Here is a full set of available resources on food safety:

- An acrylamide toolbox ([see here](#))
- Guidelines on reducing the transfer and the occurrence of undesired mineral oil hydrocarbons in food ([see here](#))
- Guidelines on food safety culture ([see here](#))
- Guidelines on food allergen management ([see here](#) and [here](#)) and precautionary allergen labelling ([see here](#))
- Guidelines on the use of flavourings ([see here](#))

Over the next 12 months, FoodDrinkEurope will promote and disseminate these resources to EU businesses.

Thriving Business Action Project

FoodDrinkEurope works on behalf of its members to call for an EU policy environment where social, environmental and economic sustainability are not only compatible, but necessary to transition to sustainable food systems.

Industry competitiveness is key for jobs and growth and impacts the capacity of companies to generate the financing required to drive change. We are particularly focused on supporting SMEs in their transition to sustainable food systems and helping develop jobs and skills in the sector.

The Thriving Business Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Progress to date:

Invested in jobs through a Pact for Skills: Employing more than 4.6 million people, the food and drink manufacturing sector is Europe's leading employer. FoodDrinkEurope has partnered with the

EU farmer association Copa-Cogeca to develop and coordinate an Agri-Food [Pact for Skills](#). The aim of the Pact, which was launched in February 2022 and is supported by a range of other stakeholders, is to upskill and reskill the current workforce, and make agri-food more attractive to young people.

In addition, as part of a European Social Dialogue, [FoodDrinkEurope partners with trade union EFFAT](#), to identify bottlenecks in recruiting new and skilled employees and to tackle challenges arising when companies have an ageing workforce.

SME capacity building: Many SMEs do not have the resources or knowledge to embark on the transition to more sustainable operations. FoodDrinkEurope has therefore launched a new capacity building project including a 'Learning Zone' to provide toolkits, guidelines, best practices and expertise.

Through 2023 and 2024, FoodDrinkEurope will be amplifying these resources – covering topics such as food safety, health, nutrition, climate change and packaging – through a series of webinars and communications through its network and partnerships.

Innovation Action Project

The goal for FoodDrinkEurope is to work collaboratively with all players, to contribute our expertise and to leave no stone unturned when it comes to finding innovations to ensure sustainable food systems.

The Innovation Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

Progress to date:

€250k commitment into the Food for Life European Technology Platform (ETP) up to 2027: FoodDrinkEurope has committed €250,000 from 2022-2027 to support the ETP [Food for Life](#). The platform, led by academic and industry experts, works on a pre-competitive research agenda to speed the transition to sustainable food systems.

This investment is part of longstanding support of the ETP and is in addition to the food and drink industry's R&I spend, which [topped €2.9 billion in 2017/18](#).

Expertise provided on multi-stakeholder projects: FoodDrinkEurope has committed to provide expertise to collectively develop and implement an EU-wide research and innovation agenda around sustainable food systems.

Specifically, FoodDrinkEurope has committed to:

- Work alongside [23 partners](#) on the European Commission's [FoodSafety4EU](#) project to shape the food safety system of the future.
- Participate in [FIELDS and I-RESTART](#), two collaborative ERASMUS+ projects to identify existing and emerging skills needs in the food sector and provide recommendations to address skills gaps.
- Work with the European trade union federation EFFAT on the FoodDrinkSD project. This Social Dialogue workstream will focus on the economic recovery of the food and drink sector post-Covid.
- Participate in [FOODPathS](#) to offer a concrete pathway and necessary tools to support the establishment of the European Partnership for Sustainable Food Systems for People, Planet & Climate, to be launched in 2023/2024.

4: Have you engaged with other food chain actors and EU and international policymakers to forge

new relationships, exchange good practices and discuss challenges encountered?

Partnerships are an important pillar of the FoodDrinkEurope Action Plan for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems, and central to our goal to deliver on the [Code of Conduct](#) objective 6 to make the food systems fit for the future.

Progress to date:

- **Food chain partnership project:** FoodDrinkEurope has an open call for organisations that share our common goal for more sustainable food systems and a mindset for collaboration, and we have worked with dozens of partners over the past 12 months.

Partnerships are also a central element of FoodDrinkEurope's climate, packaging, nutrition, innovation and competitiveness action projects – all noted in section 3 above.

#FoodFuture dialogue project: In 2021 FoodDrinkEurope launched its #FoodFuture project, a listening exercise to hear from stakeholders about their vision for the future of food.

Since the launch we have engaged with more than 3,000 stakeholders and included 100 in-depth conversations to help us build our Action Plan for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems.

Highlights of the project so far include:

- The launch of [Food For Thought](#), a sustainable food series produced by BBC StoryWorks for FoodDrinkEurope looking at innovations to transform the food system.
- The inaugural [#FoodFuture Ideas Fest](#) attended by hundreds of prominent stakeholders, all involved in shaping the future of food in some way.
- Monthly #FoodFuture emails about sustainability issues sent to 8,000 subscribers.

We will continue to engage with critical, as well as supportive, voices to build on the Action Plan and ensure it truly delivers on its objectives.

Code of Conduct leadership: In its capacity as Chair of the task force and the signatories group of the Code, FoodDrinkEurope has increased its engagement with food chain actors, international organisations and civil society groups to aid the transition towards more sustainable food systems. We continue to take a lead role in the signatories' group, driving communications and events to support the Code, amplify best practices and meet our common ambitions.
