

EUROPEAN COMMISSION DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

The Director-General

Brussels, SANTE A1/AR/mp(2024)634519

Subject: Your email of 17 January transmitting your report on food retailers' policies in Poland related to climate and environment and requesting information on Commission's activities in the area

Dear Ms Spurek,

Thank you for your email addressed to Executive Vice-President Šefčovič and Commissioners McGuinness and Kyriakides enclosing your latest report on food retailers' activities in Poland related to climate and environment. They have asked me to answer to your email on their behalf.

The Commission has been working on several initiatives related to the issues you mention in your email.

First of all, the Commission has proposed a new Directive on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition¹, which will amend the existing Unfair Commercial Practices Directive $(UCPD)^2$ to ban unfair practices such as greenwashing. More specifically, the new Directive will forbid for all products, including food, the display of sustainability labels, which are not based on a certification process or not established by public authorities, therefore ensuring more transparency and credibility for consumers. The Directive will furthermore forbid vague environmental claims to ensure that food companies and retail chains cannot claim that they are 'green' or 'eco-friendly' if they cannot demonstrate excellent environmental performance. It will also ban companies from claiming that their products are climate neutral, climate positive, or that they have a reduced climate impact based on carbon offsetting outside the product's value chain. This will ensure that consumers are not misled in believing that the consumption of certain products does not have an impact on the climate. Finally, the Directive will only allow companies to make commitments in relation to future environmental performance if they are clear, verifiable, and underpinned by a realistic implementation plan which can be regularly verified by an independent third-party expert.

Ms Anna Spurek COO | Green REV Institute E-mail: <u>anna@greenrev.org</u>

¹ <u>EUR-Lex - 52022PC0143 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)</u>

² Directive - 2005/29 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)

Furthermore, in March last year the Commission adopted the proposal for a Directive on substantiating environmental claims³. This proposal complements the Directive on Empowering Consumers for the Green Transition in the fight against greenwashing by ensuring that consumers receive reliable, comparable and verifiable information to make more environmentally sustainable purchasing decisions. It introduces specific common rules for the substantiation, communication and verification of business-to-consumer voluntary claims on environmental performance of products, services and organisations and detailed rules on environmental labelling schemes. It aims to create a level playing field and reward companies that make a genuine effort on environmental sustainability.

As announced in the Farm to Fork Strategy⁴, the Commission is also working on a sustainability labelling framework, which would govern the provision of information to consumers on the environmental, social and economic sustainability of food products. The sustainability labelling framework would be established in synergy with other relevant legislation and initiatives, amongst others the above-mentioned ones. Preparatory work on the framework is ongoing. No decision has been made at this point regarding the timing. Within this preparatory work, the Joint Research Center (JRC) of the Commission has carried out a mapping and analysis of sustainability-related labels, which are currently on the EU market, which is foreseen to be published soon.

In addition, the Commission facilitated the design of the EU Code of Conduct on responsible food business and marketing practices, which became operational as of 5 July 2021. Food associations and individual companies – including food manufacturers, wholesale and retail, and food service and hospitality companies – can sign up to the Code. The Code has seven aspirational objectives that relate to all aspects of sustainability, including climate and environment. I encourage you to submit a pledge to the Code: <u>Code of Conduct - European Commission (europa.eu)</u>.

Finally, on 19 February, Council and European Parliament negotiators reached a provisional political agreement on a Regulation to establish the first EU-level certification framework for permanent carbon removals, carbon farming and carbon storage in products. The voluntary framework is intended to facilitate and speed up the deployment of high-quality carbon removal and soil emission reduction activities in the EU. Once entered into force, the Regulation will be the first step towards introducing a comprehensive carbon removal and soil emission reduction framework in EU legislation and contribute to the EU's ambitious goal of reaching climate neutrality by 2050, as set out in the European climate law.

Yours sincerely,

[e-signed] Sandra GALLINA

³ <u>EUR-Lex - 52023PC0166 - EN - EUR-Lex (europa.eu)</u>

⁴ https://food.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-05/f2f action-plan 2020 strategy-info en.pdf