

Farm to Fork & Biodiversity Strategies: ambitious promises that still need to overcome contradictions

Brussels, 20 May 2020 – Today marks the publication of two key components of the European Green Deal: the Farm-to-Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. As the EU association representing producers of vegetable oils and protein meals, FEDIOL shares the objective of supporting the transition towards a more sustainable EU food system. At a moment when the COVID crisis has highlighted major strengths, but also certain weaknesses of the agri-food sector, these strategies should help increase resilience to climate change and adaptation to future challenges and help put in place a transformative plan to tackle the biodiversity crisis by protecting and restoring nature.

"The proposed strategies entail changes in consumption and production patterns towards enhanced sustainability with potential far-reaching implications for all actors in the chain, including for consumers. This requires an appropriate impact assessment so as to ensure realistic transition and mitigation measures" said John Grossmann, President of FEDIOL. *"It is important that the consequences of the possible political choices and their trade-offs be clearly understood and communicated"*.

Whilst setting ambitious quantitative targets that imply considerable changes to the existing food system, the Farm to Fork strategy should also safeguard EU productivity, by enabling access to technologies and tools to support plant health and ultimately maintain the viability of farming and agri-food supply chain in Europe. These apparently conflicting objectives, further to questions of food security, food affordability, the limitations to imported high-protein alternatives, as well as the role of Europe in global food production will also need to be addressed.

Empowering consumers to make healthy and sustainable choices should integrate the fact that vegetable oils and fats play an important role in a healthy and balanced diet. If EU mandatory Front of Pack (FOP) nutrition labelling and nutrient profiling systems are considered, they should be harmonized and supportive of WHO recommendations favouring vegetable oils rich in omega 3 fatty acids and polyunsaturated fatty acids, as further recognised through EU health and nutrition claims.

Similarly, on the production side, the EU strategy on Biodiversity should be seen as a way to harmonise existing practices on sustainable sourcing based on enhanced international cooperation and other tools that will allow to tackle land conversion at origin and minimise the placing of products associated with deforestation on the EU market. FEDIOL concurs on the important role trade agreements can play in promoting the protection of biodiversity with the EU trading partners.

FEDIOL recalls that our first priority remains ensuring a high degree of food safety for European consumers. Through the processing of oilseeds, the sector contributes to the production of food and feed as well as other bio-materials and is an integral part of a circular bioeconomy. It provides a clear value added in terms of food and feed safety risks management and contributes to affordable prices for consumers.

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Whilst we are conscious of our responsibility and willing to do our share in supporting system changes, we are also convinced that measures to help the transition, mitigate the impacts on supply chain players and overcome apparent contradiction in these objectives will be needed.

Note to the editor

FEDIOL represents the interests of the European vegetable oil and protein meal industry. With about 180 facilities in Europe, the sector provides over 20.000 direct employments. Our members process approximately 55 million tonnes of basic products a year. Oilseed crushing produces vegetable oils and protein meals as co-products.

For further information, please contact Nathalie Lecocq at nlecocq@fediol.eu