

PRES/004/19E

Mr Virginijus SINKEVIČIUS
European Commissioner for
Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
EUROPEAN COMMISSION
Rue de la Loi 200
1049 BRUXELLES

Brussels, 3rd December 2019

Dear Commissioner Sinkevičius,

On behalf of FoodDrinkEurope, the European food and drink manufacturing sector, we would like to congratulate you on your recent appointment as Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries.

With a turnover of €1.2 trillion and providing 4.7 million jobs, our industry is the largest manufacturing sector in the EU and a major economic contributor to Europe's prosperity. 99% of the 295,000 food and drink companies in the EU are Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. Our companies are present in every region throughout the EU and stand for both tradition and innovation. We are also the largest exporter of food and drink products in the world, confirming our excellence in food quality and safety.

Given the multiple challenges we face, from climate change and circularity to global trade tensions, from budget constraints and populism to Brexit, you and your team take office at a critical time for Europe. Now more than ever we need bold, decisive leadership together with a clear, long-term vision to ensure the sustainable growth of Europe's economy, social inclusion, and the protection of its environment and oceans, all of which go hand in hand.

We were encouraged to hear you highlight during your hearing in the European Parliament that there should be no conflict between growth and the environment, nor between innovation and social welfare. The food and drink industry puts sustainable growth at the heart of its business model; not only is it good for the environment but also it makes good business sense. Our sector has committed to contribute to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and supports a swift transition towards more sustainable food systems.

FoodDrinkEurope believes that there is an urgent need to work on concrete measures to support EU environmental ambitions, across the entire food supply chain. As you mentioned in your hearing, problems can be solved with "solutions designed for the future, not borrowed from the past". Food and drink manufacturers are committed to working with their supply chain partners, with consumers, and other stakeholders in order to drive continuous environmental improvement.

There are already a number of successful initiatives to build upon, such as the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, established in 2016; the European Commission's High-Level Multi-stakeholder Platform on the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, launched in 2018; and the Circular Plastics Alliance Declaration, which was signed by FoodDrinkEurope and many of its company members in September 2019. We believe that collaborative efforts such as these, are needed to ensure that economic development, as well as social and environmental objectives, are addressed in a coherent and coordinated manner.



We welcome the proposed development of a new Circular Economy Action Plan and support the objective to move towards a resource efficient and circular economy. In this context, we believe that ensuring proper implementation of recently adopted legislation, such as the Directive on single-use plastics, should be a key priority. Coherence and synergies between this and the future 'Farm to Fork Strategy' will also be paramount.

We would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how FoodDrinkEurope, and our sector, can help achieve your objectives in the Commission's mandate. Meanwhile, we wish you well in your new role and look forward to continued fruitful engagement and co-operation in the years ahead.

Yours sincerely,



President

