

SIGNATURE OF THE EU CODE OF CONDUCT ON RESPONSIBLE FOOD BUSINESS AND MARKETING PRACTICES

**A LOGICAL STEP IN SUPPORT OF THE
TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE
FOOD SYSTEMS**

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BACKGROUND

The EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices entered into force on 5th July 2021. It is one of the first deliverables of the Farm to Fork Strategy for a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system and an integral part of its plan composed of 27 actions.

The Code sets out the common aspirations and indicative actions which actors 'between the farm and the fork', such as food manufacturers, food service operators and retailers, can voluntarily commit and contribute to in support of the transition towards sustainable food systems.

Appointed member of one¹ of the four Task Forces which have worked on the development of the voluntary Code, EU Specialty Food Ingredients was among the first signatories. Its pledge was submitted to the European Commission before 5th July 2021.

1. T1: Thematic Session 1: Food consumption patterns (for healthy and sustainable diets)

SIGNATURE OF THE CODE – AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE ASSOCIATION’S COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT THE TRANSITION TO SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

The signature of the Code is a logical step and an integral part of the overall commitment of the association to support the transition to sustainable food systems, which started several years ago (see Table 1).

More recently, EU Specialty Food Ingredients:

- participated in the [public consultation on the Farm to Fork Strategy roadmap](#) (2020).
- published an updated Factsheet “[The indispensable link in the sustainable food chain](#)” (2020) with the following commitments of the sector:
 - Co-operate closely with all actors in the value chain, in particular farmers and the food industry
 - Accelerate our industry’s path towards minimized climate impact
 - Innovate sustainably, so that new products and solutions offered to consumers can contribute to healthier and more sustainable diets.
- adopted a [Guidance on Responsible B2B Communication](#), which specifies notably that “responsible communication will be honest, fair and focused on benefits and characteristics of a given ingredient. It will be based on science and will provide substantiated claims and information. This will enable food and drink manufacturers and, ultimately, consumers, to access reliable information on specialty food ingredients in order to make informed choice”.
- published an Infographic “[Specialty Food Ingredients: sustainable solutions for the food system](#)”(2021).
- confirmed the sponsoring of a virtual conference ‘*Between Farm and Fork: The role of innovative ingredients and food technology in achieving the F2F objectives*’ (30 November 2021).



Table 1 – Paving the way to transition to sustainable food systems – Past involvement of EU Specialty Food Ingredients (formerly known as ELC)

2011-2016	Organisation of annual Sustainability Forum (presentations by members & 14 external speakers)
2013	Contribution to DG ENVI public consultation on Sustainability of the Food System
2014	Signature of a Joint Declaration “Actions towards a more sustainable European food chain” (together with 12 other signatories of the food chain)
2014	Presentation to DG SANTE WG on Food Losses and Food Waste: <i>“Innovating to support food waste reduction/food sustainability - role of specialty food ingredients”</i>
2014	Organisation of a Symposium <i>“Ingredients for future: How specialty food ingredients contribute to environmental sustainability from farm to fork”</i>
2015	Contribution to DG ENVI public consultation on the Circular Economy



WHY A CODE?

The purpose of the Code is to unite behind a common aspirational path towards sustainable food systems by inviting businesses of all sizes active in production, trade, processing, promotion, distribution and serving of food, as well as any other food system stakeholders, to align with this common agenda and to contribute with tangible actions to help achieve the aspirational objectives and targets (see Table 2).

Table 2 – Aspirational objectives and targets

Aspirational objectives	Aspirational targets
<p>Healthy, balanced and sustainable diets for all European consumers, thereby contributing to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reversing malnutrition and diet-related NCDs in the EU 2. Reducing the environmental footprint of food consumption by 2030 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improved food consumption patterns in the EU b) A food environment that makes it easier to choose health and sustainable diets
<p>Prevention and reduction of food loss and waste (at consumer level, within internal operations, and across value chains)</p>	<p>A 50 % reduction of per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030 and reduced food losses along the food production and supply chains in the EU</p>
<p>A climate neutral food chain in Europe by 2050</p>	<p>Reducing net emissions from own operations, contributing to a 55 % GHG emission reduction target in the EU food chain by 2030 (following a science based approach)</p>
<p>An optimised circular and resource-efficient food chain in Europe</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improved resource-efficiency within own operations, contributing to sustainable, efficient use and management of energy and natural resources in operations by 2030 b) Improved sustainability of food and drink packaging, striving for all packagings towards circularity by 2030
<p>Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth , employment and decent work for all</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improved resilience and competitiveness of companies operating at any point along the food value chain by 2030 b) Quality jobs, skilled workforce and safe and inclusive workplaces for all
<p>Sustainable value creation in the European food supply chain through partnership</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improved resilience and competitiveness of companies operating at any point along the food value chain by 2030 b) Continued progress towards sustainable production, contributing to sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources by 2030 and improved animal welfare
<p>Sustainable sourcing in food supply chains</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Transformed commodity supply chains which do not contribute to deforestation, forest degradation and destruction of natural habitat and which preserve and protect high value ecosystems and biodiversity b) Improved social performance in (global) food supply chains

The Code is structured around two main components for engagement, one for European associations, one for individual companies. Adherence to the Code is voluntary and is complementary to compliance with existing legal obligations.

Roles and responsibilities are different for European associations and for individual companies (see Table 3).

Table 3 – Code’s components and roles and responsibilities of signatories

Framework	Roles and responsibilities
European associations	
<p>A general framework of aspirational objectives and targets, setting out a common vision for the EU food chain and other actors to help achieve sustainable foods systems. These aspirations are supported by a range of indicative actions, which serve as an inspiration for any food business, small or large alike, wishing to engage in the transition towards sustainable food systems.</p>	<p>Pledge to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • endorse the aspirational objectives set out in this Code (where applicable) • promote and disseminate this Code with(in) its constituency • encourage its members to align their sustainability actions to the aspirational objectives and targets of the Code and invite them, on a voluntary basis, to adhere to this Code, as appropriate • explore the possibility of developing sector-specific tools and resources in support of this Code • provide, on an annual basis, a report of their activities in support of this Code, which will be published on an open dedicated website • continue to engage in dialogue with other food chain/systems actors and EU and international policy-makers to forge (new) relationships, exchange good practices and discuss challenges encountered, learn from each other (studies, projects) and create better mutual understanding, and identify opportunities for collaboration and potential partnership.
Individual companies	
<p>A framework for ambitious commitments for companies with frontrunner ambition.</p> <p>Individual companies that are able to show leadership are invited to make tangible, relevant and measurable commitments, which will be monitored in terms of progress made, in contribution to the common aspirations set out in the Code.</p>	<p>Pledge to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • put forward at least one (1) ambitious, tangible and measurable commitment according to criteria defined in the Code • provide an annual report of progress made, which will be published on an open dedicated website

Like all other signatories, EU Specialty Food Ingredients will provide, on an annual basis, a report of its activities in support of the Code. The first evaluation will take place by the end of 2022 with the active involvement of the Collaborative Platform (one of the three governance levels on which the Code is built) and of the European Commission.

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