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Environmental Sustainability Vision Towards 2030 – Achievements, Challenges and Opportunities

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Energy and environment

Reporter

FoodDrinkEurope

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Yes

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www.fooddrinkeurope.eu

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English

Short summary

FoodDrinkEurope's "Environmental Sustainability Vision Towards 2030" states that, in order to tackle the big challenges of securing smart, green growth on the path towards a greener economy both in Europe and globally, "further efforts are needed to decouple economic growth from resource use and adverse impacts on the environment". Europe's food industry must ensure, also, that as it addresses these challenges, it does not compromise food safety, quality, nutrition and health, while at the same time, satisfying consumer demand. To meet this commitment, the strategic priorities that FoodDrinkEurope set out for Environmental Sustainability by 2030 cover three core areas, namely sustainable sourcing, resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production.

Enclosed in the report are a host of examples from industry players – both large and small - which illustrate how Europe's food and drink industry is addressing environmental sustainability and how much it is striving to improve the overall environmental performance. FoodDrinkEurope members have highlighted key achievements on which the industry can continue to build its efforts, in a number of priority areas. Case studies and examples demonstrate how "food and drink companies of all sizes and individual sectors are striving to improve their environmental performance regardless of the multitude of different raw materials, products, processes, activities and local economic and environmental conditions that they face".

- **Sustainable sourcing.** Europe's food and drink industry purchases 70 per cent of EU agricultural produce; it is thus crucial for the long-term health and prosperity of the industry that farming systems are sustainable and that biodiversity loss is prevented. Significant steps have been taken to improve the sustainable supply of key commodities with the development of many new initiatives and schemes in recent years, which, increasingly, adopt a more holistic approach to sustainability. Many companies are integrating sustainable sourcing into their overall business strategy, product design and corporate policy too.
- **Energy & Climate Change.** Food and drink manufacturers have made significant investments to improve their energy performance and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Between 1999-2008, the industry cut its GHG emissions by 18 per cent while production value increased by 29 per cent. Increasingly, by-products and waste are used as a source of renewable energy and investments in low carbon technologies, such as Combined Heat and Power (CHP), are contributing to further emission reductions. The sector is also switching to alternative refrigerants as they become technically and economically viable, safe and energy efficient.
- **Water.** Europe's food and drink industry accounts for approximately 1.8 per cent of Europe's total water use. In light of the anticipated increase in demand for water worldwide, significant efforts have been made to work with food chain partners to improve water management as well as waste water quality and water recovery and re-use. Food operators are also involved in various multi-stakeholder initiatives to address water use throughout the entire life-cycle of a product, in addition to water disclosure and voluntary water stewardship. Moreover, manufacturers have reduced water use on-site on a voluntary basis by employing tools to measure water use, adopting water management practices and investing in water-efficient technology. As a result, the industry is achieving measurable water reduction and cost savings.
- **Waste.** Addressing waste and, in particular, food waste, is a top priority for the food sector given that when a food is wasted, the resources that were invested in its production are also wasted. At EU level, annual food waste is estimated at a total of 90 million tonnes. Manufacturers are constantly striving to use 100 per cent of the agricultural resources they put into food production and are increasingly finding uses for by-products not only as food, but also as animal feed, fertilizers, cosmetics, lubricants and pharmaceuticals, amongst others. In addition, re-use, recycling and recovery by producing bioenergy from waste, are key methods for the industry to achieve optimal raw material utilization and waste management. In addition, numerous food and drink companies are making commitments aiming for zero waste to landfill within the coming years.
- **Packaging.** The food industry is increasingly using eco-design tools to optimise the environmental performance of products and packaging and is turning to reusable packaging solutions wherever environmentally beneficial and feasible. At the same time, packaging recycling rates have risen considerably over the past number of years. FoodDrinkEurope members have committed to producer responsibility recycling and recovery schemes in EU Member States where they have been introduced. Manufacturers are working continuously with the packaging industry to develop innovative packaging materials with improved environmental impacts, while maintaining product protection and preservation.
- **Transport & Distribution.** Transport plays a vital role in the supply and distribution chains for Europe's food manufacturers. As a pillar of the EU economy, the food industry is an important user of different modes of transport, in particular, Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGV). The sector is actively seeking to enhance and reduce the adverse environmental impact of transport through collaboration with transport and distribution providers, to improve efficiencies in product sourcing, modal shifts, distribution networks, route planning and vehicle choice.
- **Consumers.** Food and drink products are a fundamental part of the daily lives of Europe's 500 million citizens, providing nutrition, health, well-being and enjoyment. As such, consumers are at the heart of how the food industry operates, in responding to ever-evolving consumer demand and lifestyles (pack sizes, smart packaging to preserve food for longer, etc.). Nonetheless, consumers generate significant direct environmental impacts in the way they transport, store, prepare and dispose of food and there is a need for scientifically-reliable and harmonized analyses setting out where improvements in the food chain, including at the household stage, can be made. A key achievement of the European food and drink industry is the development of a harmonized assessment methodology for the environmental impact of food and drink products, the Protocol for the Environmental Assessment of Food and Drink. This Protocol is a key deliverable of the European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Round Table and has been developed in collaboration with the European Commission and food chain partners, NGOs, academia and national experts. The Round Table has also developed recommendations on the use of

tools for communicating environmental information, including to the consumer. The Recommendations highlight good practice and key tools that may be used to communicate environmental information, while recognising that to do so effectively, requires the use of a multi-pronged approach. Moreover, many food companies already provide voluntary information to consumers about the environmental performance of their products through various communication channels.

- Challenges for 2030

- An increase of 50 per cent in food supplies will be needed globally
- Global demand for energy is expected to increase by 50 per cent
- Global demand for water is expected to increase by 40 per cent
- Freight transport levels in the EU are expected to increase by 40 per cent on those of 2005

Suggestions

A number of key opportunities exist for Europe's food and drink industry across the following seven main areas, if the industry is to more fully tap into its potential for sustainable growth towards 2030.

Sourcing: design sustainable supply chains and ensure that ingredient crops are cultivated responsibly with particular attention to halting deforestation; mobilise public and private investment in agricultural productivity and yield growth; improve communication and transparency about certification scheme achievements at field level; providing technical assistance to farmers, especially smallholders, and advice on farming best practice; support ongoing efforts to improve collaboration, synergies and the establishment of common priorities between different biodiversity-related conventions.

Energy: share and encourage the spread of best practice and technology transfer, especially among SMEs; enhance focus, R&D, investment and cooperation among all stakeholders; improve commercial competitiveness of alternative energy sources, such as from by-products and waste; promote energy efficiency by public authorities, and incentives for businesses that apply resource efficiency measures.

Water: further roll-out national, sector-wide and company guidance on good water management practices; call for economic incentives for water efficient eco-innovation and investment and water prices that reflect real costs in line with the EU Water Framework Directive; establish an internationally harmonised standard for assessing water impacts, fill data gaps on water availability, where water comes from, and whether good water management practices are used.

Waste: call for support for research and innovation for new uses for by-products and food waste; launch joint campaigns and a toolkit for tackling food waste along the food chain; work with supply chain partners to maximise resource efficiency; identify opportunities to centralise by-product utilization (e.g. centralise biogas production from food and drink facility by-products in a given area).

Packaging: roll-out R&D and innovation in lightweight materials, biodegradable materials, materials' reduction, recyclability and recoverability, as well as for bio-based materials; cooperate with other stakeholders to prevent packaging waste through the promotion of re-use, recycling and recovery; share best practice packaging waste management with national recycling and recovery programs; call on policy makers to improve reporting procedures in Member States and data quality; ensure sufficient investment by public authorities in recycling and recovery infrastructures.

Transport: increase cooperation with transport and logistics operators to optimize loading rates and increase back-hauling; improve availability of alternative fuels and rail networks; prioritise rail and water-based transport (where feasible) and optimise from a life-cycle perspective; widen delivery windows to retailers to avoid peak commuting hours; improve vehicle design and the use of technology for optimal route planning.

Consumers: work with stakeholders to help avoid food waste at every stage of the value chain, particularly at the household level; optimise packaging and ensure commercial viability of technological innovations that could help reduce food waste; roll-out joint, multi-faceted consumer communications and campaigns to promote sustainable consumption; enhance collaboration between food banks, food and drink manufacturers, logistics operators and retailers to redirect surplus food to the needy.

Modelling

Reference to other trends reports? If yes, which reports?

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