



## EU Code of Conduct for Responsible Food and Business Practices – FoodDrinkEurope activity report

July 2024

### Executive summary

As one of Europe's largest manufacturing sectors and an integral link in the food chain, FoodDrinkEurope is committed to support the transition towards more sustainable and resilient food systems. We were honoured to chair the EU Task Force to develop the "[EU Code of Conduct for Responsible Food and Business Practices](#)" and to work together with a wide range of food chain representatives, environmental and health NGOs, trade unions, consumer groups, the European Commission and global organisations such as FAO, OECD and WHO, during the first half of 2021.

Since the publication of the Code in July 2021, FoodDrinkEurope has established a dedicated workstream to support the implementation of the Code through all of our departments.

Highlights of our activities include:

- Action Project for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems: In June 2022, FoodDrinkEurope launched its [Action Project for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems](#) with a range of activities to help food and drink businesses meet all aspirational objectives within the Code. In addition to supporting the objectives within the Code, our Action Plan has built in new targets to bring in more aspects of sustainable and resilient food systems, including food safety, food security and the continued viability of food businesses. In total we have 25 ongoing activities within the Action Project.
- Commitments to the Code: Beyond FoodDrinkEurope's commitment towards implementing the Code's aspirations and objectives, we continue to promote the Code to our members and beyond. So far 15 member associations and 18 member companies have made concrete corporate and/or sector-specific commitments to the Code, with further commitments expected.
- Activities to support the Code: In order to strengthen the Code, FoodDrinkEurope launched its dedicated #FoodFuture dialogue project to engage with European stakeholders on how to deliver sustainable food systems. We also continue to promote the Code widely through our network and to advocate for its implementation.
- Signatories to the Code: FoodDrinkEurope signed the Code on behalf of its entire membership, covering a network of 27 European sector associations, 26 national food and drink federations and 25 global food and drink companies, committed to help meet the Code's aspirations and objectives.
- Chairmanship of the Signatories Group of the Code: FoodDrinkEurope continues its commitment following the launch of the Code to act as chairperson of the Signatories Group of the Code.

*Please see below an overview of activities to support FoodDrinkEurope's signature of the Code.*

## 1: How have you promoted and disseminated the Code?

FoodDrinkEurope continues to promote the Code widely both to internal and external stakeholders.

Internal promotion:

- The FoodDrinkEurope Board approved a move to build the organisation's internal *Roadmap 2023-2029* around its Action Project, which implements the Code. This ensures that all activities within FoodDrinkEurope are driving towards the aspirational objectives within the Code.
- In view of the above, all FoodDrinkEurope committees – Economic Affairs, Environment and Sustainability, Food Safety, Consumers and Health, Communications and Public Affairs – as well as many working groups, now have a dedicated Action Project to deliver on the Code. This ensures the Code objectives feature in all committee meetings.
- In addition, seven FoodDrinkEurope Board members have become *Action Plan Champions* to promote the activities to internal and external audiences. We have also established an informal Action Plan Steering Group to build further momentum behind the initiative.
- FoodDrinkEurope continues to support members to sign on to the Code, and maintain their commitment to it, through internal comms, events and meetings.

External promotion:

- In June 2024, FoodDrinkEurope's annual 'Ideas Fest' event was used to promote its Action Project for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems. The event, attended by around 700 participants, focused on ideas to help meet the Code objectives around climate change, the circular economy and nutrition.
- FoodDrinkEurope has supported the translation of the Code into 14 official languages (on top of seven official languages provided by Copa-Cogeca), which are published on the European Commission's [website](#).
- FoodDrinkEurope has presented its Action Project, in the context of the Code, at numerous public events and widely on social media.
- We have also created a [dedicated section](#) on the FoodDrinkEurope website to showcase its members' sustainability initiatives in support of the Code.

## 2: How have you ensured members align their sustainability actions and/or business practices to the aspirational objectives and targets of the Code?

In July 2021, FoodDrinkEurope signed the Code on behalf of all members – 26 national federations, 27 European sector associations and 25 companies. Members are also encouraged to further disseminate the Code to their members.

As noted above, FoodDrinkEurope presented and promoted the Code in multiple meetings, including at Board level, as well as individually to associations and their members and to multinational companies at European and global level.

Beyond the commitment of our 78 members towards implementing the Code's aspirations and objectives, we have also seen 15 member associations and 18 member companies make concrete commitments to the Code, with more commitments expected.

At FoodDrinkEurope, we launched our Action Project for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems to help the food and drink industry to implement the Code and deliver on sustainable food systems. Read more about this in section 3 below.

All FoodDrinkEurope committees have used the Action Project to incorporate the Code into their work program.

## 3: Have you developed sector-specific tools and resources in support of this Code?

There are now 20 specific actions which fall into our Climate, Sustainable Packaging, Nutrition, Food Safety, Thriving Business, and Innovation Action Projects. Here are the current activities underway within

each action project:

## Climate Action Project

FoodDrinkEurope's *Climate Action Project* is a dedicated workstream to help food and drink businesses move to net zero emissions and tackle wider environmental challenges. The project takes a collaborative approach to develop partnerships to harness the power of the food chain to drive systemic change.

The *Climate Action Project* delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objectives 1, 2, 6 and 7.

Progress to date:

**Net zero toolkit:** FoodDrinkEurope has developed a toolkit to help food and drink businesses, especially SMEs, to plot their individual path towards net-zero. Check it out on our online Learning Zone.

The toolkit is based on a study by leading environmental consultancy Ricardo to develop recommendations and [a practical roadmap](#) to decarbonise the food and drink industry.

Through 2024 and 2025 FoodDrinkEurope will be amplifying the toolkit to all food and drink businesses through a series of webinars and communications through its network and partnerships.

**Funding sustainable farming:** In 2024, FoodDrinkEurope [published a research paper](#) looking at pathways to fund the transition to more sustainable agriculture. It reveals the cost of transitioning to more sustainable agriculture in the EU is estimated to be in the range of €28-35 billion for the first year. The paper also delves in the pivotal question of 'who pays' question and explores various funding avenues such as public-private partnerships, the role of financing institutions, and voluntary carbon markets.

In addition, FoodDrinkEurope organised a farm visit, hosted by Soil Capital, to showcase best practices of collaboration in the supply chain towards more regenerative practices.

**Food waste reduction toolkit:** [Nearly 59 million tonnes of food in the EU are wasted every year](#), which equates to 131 kilograms per inhabitant and about €132 billion. About 70 percent of this waste comes from retail, foodservice and households. This comes at the expense of vast resources and energy. Simply put, food waste is bad for business.

FoodDrinkEurope will soon publish a practical toolkit to help food and drink businesses plot their individual path towards reducing and eliminating food losses and food waste. We are also working in partnership with the European food banks (FEBA) to update our joint guidelines to encourage businesses to support their local food banks.

**SME Greener Planet Award:** One of the best ways to inspire businesses to take effective action to tackle environmental challenges is to show them that it's not only possible, but also good for business.

FoodDrinkEurope has therefore established [The Foodies](#), a bi-annual competition to recognise some of Europe's most sustainable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). The Greener Planet Award is for an SME committed to reducing its environmental impact.

In September 2022, the [Greener Planet Award was won by Flahavans](#) – an Irish SME that sources 70% of its energy needs from renewables. The awards are back in 2024!

**Climate conscious office:** Recognising the importance to *walk the talk* FoodDrinkEurope has established a *Planet Action Team* within the office. We have developed a plan to reduce our carbon emissions, supported a cookstove project to prevent deforestation in Burkina Faso and invested

into Soil Capital's carbon sequestration certification scheme, helping French farmers reduce their carbon emissions by 50-tons in 2023 – this is equivalent to the amount of carbon sequestered by 60 acres of forest in a year.

The Climate Action Project will continue to evolve with guidelines and training to help food and drink businesses tackle wider environmental challenges including deforestation and unsustainable sourcing.

### **Sustainable Packaging Action Project**

FoodDrinkEurope established its *Sustainable Packaging Action Project* to help food and drink businesses help ensure all food and drink packaging is recyclable or re-usable by 2030. The project takes a collaborative approach to develop partnerships to harness the power of the food chain to drive systemic change.

*The Sustainable Packaging Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objectives 2, 3, 4 and 6.*

*Progress to date:*

**Sustainable packaging pathway:** In June 2024 FoodDrinkEurope published its Sustainable Packaging Pathway document to help policymakers and businesses move fast to deliver more sustainable packaging. The pathway supports FoodDrinkEurope's commitment and membership of the [Circular Plastics Alliance](#).

**Product environmental footprint guidelines:** As an important link to the circular economy and wider sustainability agenda, work on resource efficiency is also critical. FoodDrinkEurope has [published guidelines](#) to help food and drink businesses use the EU product environmental footprint (PEF) methodology to evaluate the environmental footprint of a product and provide product environmental information to consumers.

**Inspire businesses through best practices on sustainable packaging:** FoodDrinkEurope has developed an [industry action page](#) to showcase member activities on sustainable packaging. There are currently more than 50 examples – including how companies are working on new designs, developing new sustainable materials and improving recyclability – which are used to inspire and teach best practices to the wider industry.

Through 2024 and 2025, FoodDrinkEurope will be amplifying the guidelines and best practices to all food and drink businesses through a series of webinars and communications through its network.

### **Nutrition Action Project**

FoodDrinkEurope established its *Nutrition Action Project* to help food and drink businesses meet targets on nutrition and healthier living. The project takes a collaborative approach to develop partnerships to harness the power of the food chain to drive systemic change. In 2024 and 2025, FoodDrinkEurope will look in more depth at how food environments can help consumers choose a healthy and balanced diet.

*The Nutrition Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objective 1.*

*Progress to date:*

**Reformulation and product innovation guide:** FoodDrinkEurope has developed [guidelines on reformulation and product innovation](#) to help manufacturers, particularly SMEs, by providing insight on the aspects of product innovation and reformulation that may need to be considered when undertaking reformulation work or developing new innovative products.

**Fibre and wholegrain toolkit:** In 2024, FoodDrinkEurope published [a guide for SMEs](#) with examples and best practices on how to use fibre and wholegrain in product development, innovation, and reformulation. We will soon publish a more technical toolkit that outlines the key steps to follow to enrich food and drink products with more fibre and wholegrain.

**Portions toolkit:** FoodDrinkEurope published new guidelines on portions to help manufacturers, particularly SMEs, understand how to develop portions and related communications.

**Salt toolkit:** Inspired by the work done on fibre and wholegrain, FoodDrinkEurope will soon develop a comprehensive guide on salt reduction, showcasing the best practices in the industry.

**Digital labelling initiative:** FoodDrinkEurope published a [report](#) and [green paper on digital labelling](#) outlining opportunities and FoodDrinkEurope's main policy asks for digital labelling. Check out our launch webinar [here](#).

**Labelling guidelines:** In 2023, FoodDrinkEurope published [updated guidelines on legibility of labelling](#) to help manufacturers to comply with the legal requirement to provide legible information on packs.

**SME Healthier Living Award:** FoodDrinkEurope's [Foodies awards](#), recognise some of Europe's most sustainable small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). In September 2022, the [Healthier Living Award was won by Good4U](#) – an Irish SME that provides healthy snacks. The next edition of The Foodies will take place in September 2024.

**Call to action on healthy lifestyles:** In 2022, FoodDrinkEurope signed the '[call to action](#)' led by the International Sport and Culture Association (ISCA) and JOGG/Youth Health Community for a European plan to prevent non-communicable diseases and promote healthy lifestyles.

## Food Safety Action Project

Food safety remains FoodDrinkEurope's number one priority. Food and drink cannot be healthy if it is not safe. EU food safety standards are among the highest in the world and FoodDrinkEurope will continue to provide businesses with guidance to ensure the protection of consumer health. We must ensure food safety while also seeking to enhance environmental protection and maintain the competitiveness of the sector.

The Food Safety Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objective 1.

### Progress to date:

#### **Food safety toolkit:**

FoodDrinkEurope continues to promote and disseminate its guidance documents to EU businesses. Our objective is to inform companies about major issues to be taken into account to assure consumer safety and product compliance.

Here is a full set of available resources on food safety:

- An acrylamide toolbox ([see here](#))
- Guidelines on reducing the transfer and the occurrence of undesired mineral oil hydrocarbons in food ([see here](#))
- Guidelines on food safety culture ([see here](#))
- Guidelines on food allergen management ([see here](#) and [here](#)) and precautionary allergen labelling ([see here](#))
- Guidelines on the use of flavourings ([see here](#))

Over the next 12 months, FoodDrinkEurope will promote and disseminate these resources to EU businesses.

## Thriving Business Action Project

FoodDrinkEurope works on behalf of its members to call for an EU policy environment where social, environmental and economic sustainability are not only compatible, but necessary to transition to sustainable food systems.

Industry competitiveness is key for jobs and growth and impacts the capacity of companies to generate the financing required to drive change. We are particularly focused on supporting SMEs in their transition to sustainable food systems and helping develop jobs and skills in the sector.

The Thriving Business Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

### Progress to date:

**Invested in jobs through a Pact for Skills:** Employing more than 4.6 million people, the food and drink manufacturing sector is Europe's leading employer. FoodDrinkEurope has partnered with the EU farmer association Copa-Cogeca to develop and coordinate an Agri-Food [Pact for Skills](#). The aim of the Pact, which was launched in February 2022 and is supported by a range of other stakeholders, is to upskill and reskill the current workforce, and make agri-food more attractive to young people.

In addition, as part of a European Social Dialogue, [FoodDrinkEurope partners with trade union EFFAT](#), to identify bottlenecks in recruiting new and skilled employees and to tackle challenges arising when companies have an ageing workforce.

**SME capacity building:** Many SMEs do not have the resources or knowledge to embark on the transition to more sustainable operations. FoodDrinkEurope has therefore launched a new capacity building project including a our new Learning Zone to provide toolkits, guidelines, best practices and expertise.

Through 2024 and 2025, FoodDrinkEurope will be amplifying these resources – covering topics such as food safety, health, nutrition, climate change and packaging – through a series of webinars and communications.

## Innovation Action Project

The goal for FoodDrinkEurope is to work collaboratively with all players, to contribute our expertise and to leave no stone unturned when it comes to finding innovations to ensure sustainable food systems.

The Innovation Action Project delivers on the [Code of Conduct](#) objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 7.

### Progress to date:

**€250k commitment into the Food for Life European Technology Platform (ETP) up to 2027:** FoodDrinkEurope has committed €250,000 from 2022-2027 to support the ETP [Food for Life](#). The platform, led by academic and industry experts, works on a pre-competitive research agenda to speed the transition to sustainable food systems.

This investment is part of longstanding support of the ETP and is in addition to the food and drink industry's R&I spend, which [topped €2.1 billion](#) in 2021 from Europe's top 10 companies alone.

**Expertise provided on multi-stakeholder projects:** FoodDrinkEurope provides expertise to collectively develop and implement an EU-wide research and innovation agenda around sustainable food systems.

Specifically, FoodDrinkEurope has committed to:

- Contribute to the EU Food Safety Platform, launched by the European Commission's [FoodSafety4EU](#) project.
- Work alongside 16 partners on the European Commission's CATALYSE project to accelerate and make more efficient the uptake, by food system actors, of knowledge and innovative solutions that promote food safety.
- Participate in [FIELDS and I-RESTART](#), two collaborative ERASMUS+ projects to identify existing and emerging skills needs in the food sector and provide recommendations to address skills gaps.
- Work with the European trade union federation EFFAT on the FoodDrinkSD project. This Social Dialogue workstream will focus on the economic recovery of the food and drink sector post-Covid.
- Participate in [FOODPathS](#) to offer a concrete pathway and necessary tools to support the establishment of the European Partnership for Sustainable Food Systems for People, Planet & Climate, to be launched in 2024.

#### **4: Have you engaged with other food chain actors and EU and international policymakers to forge new relationships, exchange good practices and discuss challenges encountered?**

Partnerships are an important pillar of the FoodDrinkEurope Action Project for Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems, and central to our goal to deliver on the [Code of Conduct](#) objective 6 to make the food systems fit for the future.

##### Progress to date:

- **Food chain partnership project:** FoodDrinkEurope has an open call for organisations that share our common goal for more sustainable food systems and a mindset for collaboration, and we have worked with dozens of partners over the past 12 months.

Partnerships are also a central element of FoodDrinkEurope's climate, packaging, nutrition, innovation and competitiveness action projects – all noted in section 3 above.

**#FoodFuture dialogue project:** In 2021 FoodDrinkEurope launched its #FoodFuture project, a listening exercise to hear from stakeholders about their vision for the future of food.

Since the launch we have engaged with more than 4,000 stakeholders:

Highlights of the project so far include:

- The launch of [Food For Thought](#), a sustainable food series produced by BBC StoryWorks for FoodDrinkEurope looking at innovations to transform the food system.
- The [#FoodFuture Ideas Fest](#) attended by around 700 prominent stakeholders, all involved in shaping the future of food in some way.
- Monthly #FoodFuture emails about sustainability issues sent to 8,000 subscribers.

We will continue to engage with critical, as well as supportive, voices to build on the Action Plan and ensure it truly delivers on its objectives.

**Code of Conduct leadership:** In its capacity as Chair of the task force and the signatories group of the Code, FoodDrinkEurope has increased its engagement with food chain actors, international organisations

and civil society groups to aid the transition towards more sustainable food systems. We continue to take a lead role in the signatories' group, driving communications and events to support the Code, amplify best practices and meet our common ambitions.

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