



# Action Plan for Sustainable Food Systems

# FoodDrinkEurope Action Plan for Sustainable Food Systems

This Action Plan aims to tackle core challenges around **climate change, packaging and nutrition**.

With its capacity to **invest, innovate and build partnerships**, the food and drink industry is capable to deliver truly transformative change.

If there is a **positive policy environment and necessary infrastructure**, the industry's potential for positive impact can be fully released.

The Action Plan will help deliver on the seven objectives set out in the [Code of Conduct on Responsible Business and Marketing Practices](#).

- 1



Healthy, balanced and balanced diets for all European consumers
- 2



Prevention and reduction of food loss and waste
- 3



Climate neutral food chain
- 4



Optimised circular and resource efficient food chain
- 5



Inclusive and sustainable growth and employment
- 6



Sustainable value creation through partnerships
- 7



Sustainable sourcing in food supply chains



## CLIMATE CHANGE

and the path to net zero



**THE TARGETS:**

- Net zero carbon food chain by 2050
- Halve food waste by 2030
- A deforestation-free food supply chain
- All commodities sourced from sustainable farming

**OUR COMMITMENT:**

- Establish a Climate Action Project to develop concrete measures towards net zero, starting with a decarbonisation toolkit
- Establish a sustainable farming partnerships initiative
- Inspire businesses through the SME Greener Planet Award

## SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING

and the circular economy



**THE TARGETS:**

- All food and drink packaging recyclable or reusable by 2030
- 10m tonnes of recycled plastic in new products by 2025

**OUR COMMITMENT:**

- Establish a Packaging Action Project to help businesses with concrete measures to be more circular
- Work with the Circular Plastics Alliance to tackle plastic use
- Inspire businesses through promoting best practices on sustainable packaging

## NUTRITION

and healthier living



**THE TARGETS:**

- Healthy, balanced and sustainable diets for all European consumers
- Reverse malnutrition and diet-related health conditions
- A food environment that makes it easier to choose healthy and sustainable diets

**OUR COMMITMENT:**

- Establish a Nutrition Action Project to develop concrete measures for healthier living, starting with a reformulation toolkit
- Update and disseminate food safety guidelines to food and drink businesses
- Inspire businesses with the SME Healthier Living Award

INVESTMENT, INNOVATION and PARTNERSHIPS will help us achieve more sustainable food systems

### INVESTMENT to finance the change



**OUR COMMITMENT:**

- Support sustainable economic growth, trade and investment
- Invest in jobs through the Pact for Skills

### INNOVATION to speed up the change



**OUR COMMITMENT:**

- Invest €250,000 into ETP Food For Life project up to 2027
- Provide expertise to multi-platform partnerships

### PARTNERSHIPS to scale the change



**OUR COMMITMENT:**

- Establish a Sustainable Food Systems Partnership Programme
- Initiate #FoodFuture dialogue project part two

## More Than Food Project

FoodDrinkEurope's secretariat shares a strong determination to help the food and drink industry and its partners transition towards more sustainable food systems. That's why we launched our More than Food project, which works across three areas:

### Our planet

- Climate neutral office and ambitious carbon reduction plan
- Partnership with Soil Capital to support sustainable farming and 50 tonnes of carbon sequestration

### Our community

- Partnership with Brussels food bank
- Regular community food collections
- Up to 46 office days committed to charitable work

### Our people

Supporting the values, health and wellbeing of staff



# Leading transformative change

Dirk Jacobs, FoodDrinkEurope  
Director General



The world is facing environmental, economic and social challenges on a scale never seen before. The Covid pandemic and war in Ukraine have added a new layer of difficulties with a global economy under strain, energy prices soaring and food supply chains under pressure.

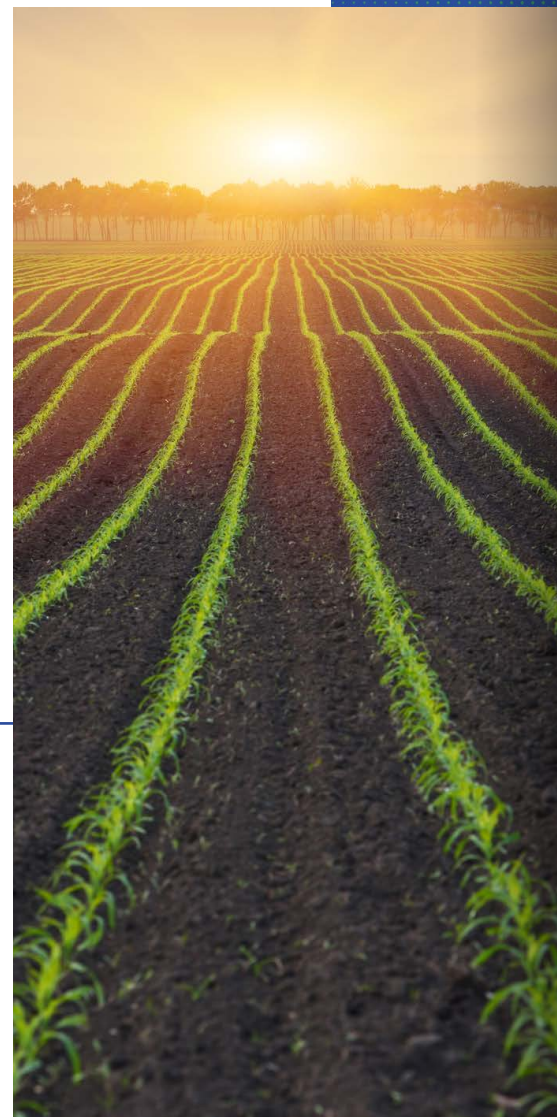
Never before has there been a greater need to build resilient and sustainable food systems which can ride out these challenges, ensure food security and protect the planet for generations to come.

It is in this context that FoodDrinkEurope has developed its transformative Action Plan for Sustainable Food Systems.

## Cracking the Code

The Action Plan is part of FoodDrinkEurope's work to deliver on the **EU Code of Conduct on Responsible Food Business and Marketing Practices**.

The Code provides a series of aspirational objectives and indicative actions towards sustainable food systems – this Action Plan brings these objectives to life.



## We're listening

The Action Plan has also been shaped by an extensive 10-month listening exercise – FoodDrinkEurope's #FoodFuture campaign – which engaged over 2,000 people and included in-depth conversations about the future of food with over 100 stakeholders, including policymakers, civil society, businesses and consumers.

We discussed the urgent need to tackle major societal challenges in front of us and outlined opportunities for FoodDrinkEurope to provide bold leadership.

## Only together

The development of positive partnerships is an underlying theme of the Action Plan. When policymakers, civil society, the private sector and consumers come together for a common goal, the speed of change can be fast.

We have got no time to lose. With constructive relationships and the right policy environment and infrastructure, Europe's food and drink businesses can deliver truly green growth, while producing quality food and drinks for a growing population.

## A sustainable mindset

While this Action Plan focuses on FoodDrinkEurope's external role towards more sustainable food and drink, we also believe that sustainability starts at home. I am therefore proud to include our More than Food project in the Action Plan, where

## We're acting

Central to the Action Plan are 15 core commitments which will form the basis of work with our members and partners to meet a series of ambitious targets. It marks a transformative shift in the way FoodDrinkEurope operates as an association, recognising our responsibility to be an agent for change for the European food and drink sector to help achieve sustainable food systems.

The Action Plan is the beginning of a journey, and we look forward to hearing, learning and working together with anyone interested in our common bid towards making our food systems fit for the future.



our staff work in the local community, take action for the good of our planet and ensure we support each other's values, health and wellbeing.

We look forward to working with you for a better food future.



# CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE PATH TO NET ZERO

Delivering on the [Code of Conduct](#)  
objectives 1, 2, 6, 7



To avoid irreversible and disastrous consequences for generations to come, we must work around the world and across every sector to fight the climate emergency.

Food production from farm-to-fork represents 30% of total carbon emissions within the EU, with the food manufacturing process accounting for **3% of total EU emissions**. Food is also one of the first victims of climate change.

With this in mind, the food and drink sector is well placed to not only reduce greenhouse gas emissions from its own operations, but also to work with partners to cut emissions along the entire food value chain.

At the same time, our industry must tackle interrelated environmental challenges around food waste, deforestation and unsustainable sourcing.





## The targets:

1. Net zero carbon food chain by 2050; contribute to a 55% reduction of EU food chain emissions by 2030
2. Halve per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030 and reduce food losses along EU food supply chain
3. Deforestation-free food supply chain, with no forest degradation and no destruction of natural habitats
4. All commodities sourced from sustainable farming

## Our commitments:

### Establish a Climate Action Project

The Climate Action Project is a new dedicated FoodDrinkEurope workstream to help food and drink businesses move to net zero emissions and tackle wider environmental challenges. The project will develop partnerships to harness the power of the food chain to drive systemic change. Current activities:

- FoodDrinkEurope commissioned a study by leading environmental consultancy Ricardo to develop recommendations and a [roadmap](#) to decarbonise the food and drink industry.
- The next step is to develop a practical toolkit and training to help food and drink businesses plot their individual path towards net-zero emissions.

The Climate Action Project will also identify concrete measures, including industry guidelines and training, to help food and drink businesses tackle wider environmental challenges including food waste, deforestation and unsustainable sourcing.

### Establish a sustainable farming partnership initiative

Given the food and drink manufacturing industry buys 70% of EU farm produce, as well as produce from around the world, FoodDrinkEurope has established a sustainable farming partnership initiative to work with farmer organisations towards more sustainable farming and sourcing.

### Inspire businesses with the 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 established [The Foodies](#), a 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.

FoodDrinkEurope will showcase the finalists and winners as part of its efforts to inspire and guide the industry towards more sustainable food systems.

## Our policy asks:

To facilitate a swift transition towards net zero and to reach our wider environmental targets, the food and drink industry urges policymakers to prioritise the following areas:

- **Access to renewable energy:** Ensure pan-European infrastructure and access to renewable energy for manufacturing businesses of all sizes.
- **Support for innovation:** Develop a predictable policy environment that encourages investments into low impact technology, as well as low impact food and drink products.
- **Competitiveness of SMEs:** Consult SMEs, which make up 99% of the food and drink manufacturing sector, to ensure environmental policy takes their capacity and needs into account.
- **Consumer engagement:** Help consumers play their part with a harmonised approach to provide environmental information on products, prevent misleading claims and avoid food waste.
- **Sustainable farming:** Use the Common Agricultural Policy, as well as Green Deal and farm to fork initiatives, to support sustainable farming practices that lead to healthier soils, carbon sequestration and support farmer livelihoods.
- **Global leadership:** Include trade and sustainable development chapters in all EU Free Trade Agreements to ensure trading partners agree on shared sustainability principles, such as the protection of biodiversity and climate change mitigation.

To learn more about FoodDrinkEurope's detailed policy positions on EU legislative proposals around climate and the environment please contact [info@fooddrinkeurope.eu](mailto:info@fooddrinkeurope.eu).

## Company case studies:

By integrating climate change in their business strategies, European food and drink manufacturers have achieved a [21% reduction in carbon emissions per unit of value added](#) between 2008 and 2018, that is to say, the industry is getting more carbon efficient when producing food and drink products.

[Here](#) are some examples of how members

are reducing their [carbon emissions](#).

In addition, our members have developed a range of initiatives to tackle [food waste](#), end [deforestation](#) and improve their [sustainable sourcing](#).

You can find more pledges and commitments to the Code of Conduct [here](#).



# SUSTAINABLE PACKAGING AND THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Delivering on the [Code of Conduct](#)  
objectives 2, 3, 4, 6



Packaging plays a  
vital role in protecting,  
preserving and  
transporting food  
and drink products to  
consumers.

However, the production and use of packaging, such as plastic, can have adverse environmental impacts. When packaging is overused, littered or incinerated, rather than minimised, re-used or recycled, the environmental damage to our planet is exacerbated.

As a major user of packaging, the food and drink industry has an important role to play in improving the circularity of packaging for food and drink products and driving future innovation.





## The targets:

1. All food and drink packaging is recyclable or reusable by 2030
2. 10m tonnes of recycled plastic are used in new products by 2025



## Our commitments:

### Establish a Packaging Action Project

The Packaging Action Project is a new dedicated FoodDrinkEurope workstream to develop partnerships and activities to help food and drink businesses meet sustainable packaging and circular economy targets.

As an important link to the circular economy and wider sustainability agenda, work on resource efficiency is also critical. FoodDrinkEurope will soon publish 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.

### Work with Circular Plastics Alliance to tackle plastic use

As a member of the [Circular Plastics Alliance](#), FoodDrinkEurope has committed to promote the use of more recycled plastics in Europe,

as well as improving sustainable packaging design, packaging waste collection and sorting, and supporting innovations for new, more sustainable packaging materials.

### Inspire businesses through best practices on sustainable packaging

FoodDrinkEurope has developed an [industry action online tool](#) 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.

## Our policy asks:

To facilitate a swift transition to a circular economy and to meet packaging targets, the food and drink industry urges policymakers to prioritise the following areas:

- **Improved infrastructure and technology:** Increase EU and Member State investment into packaging waste management infrastructure and recycling technologies, such as chemical recycling.
- **Safe recycling:** Establish rules for the safe recycling of plastic materials that go into food contact materials, going beyond PET which is already well regulated. Alignment between the EU packaging and food contact regulations will be key.
- **Access to recycled material:** Strengthen the Single Market for recycled packaging materials and guarantee priority access to food quality recycled materials for the food and drink industry.
- **Collection and sorting:** Enhance Extended Producer Responsibility schemes and introduce deposit return schemes where needed to increase packaging waste collection and sorting.
- **Consumer role:** Help consumers with better information and awareness around zero waste, re-use and re-cycling, including harmonised guidance on sorting packaging waste.

To learn more about FoodDrinkEurope's detailed policy positions on EU legislative proposals around packaging and the circular economy please contact [info@fooddrinkeurope.eu](mailto:info@fooddrinkeurope.eu).

## Company case studies:

FoodDrinkEurope's members have developed a [range of initiatives](#) to deliver more sustainable packaging and a circular economy which you can find on our [website](#).

In addition, many food and drink companies have made ambitious circular economy commitments to the [Code of Conduct](#).





# NUTRITION AND HEALTHIER LIVING

Delivering on the [Code of Conduct](#)  
objective 1

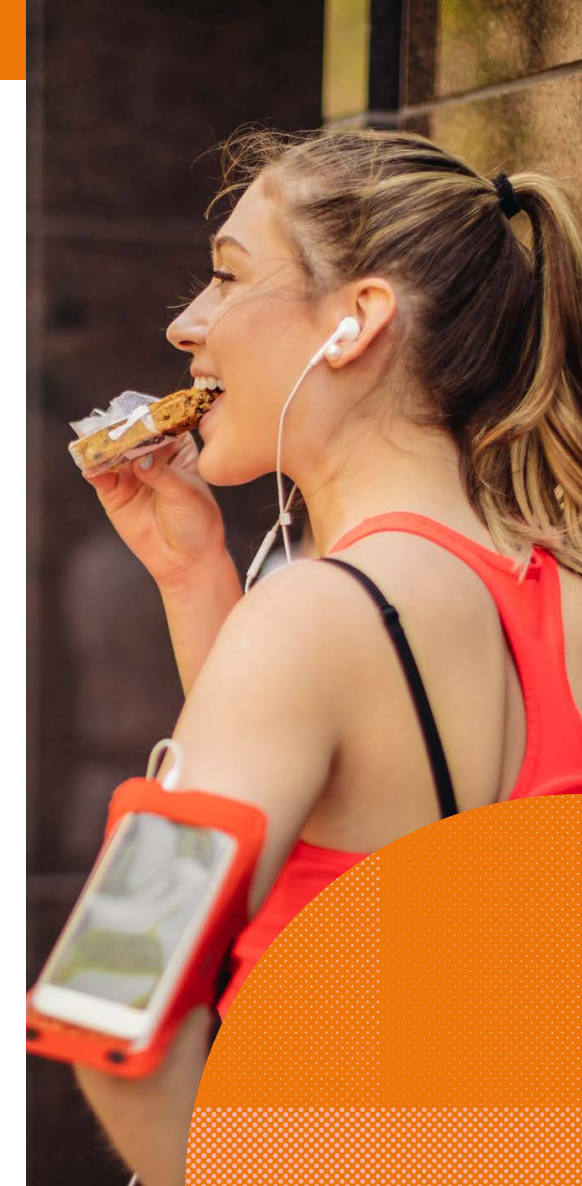


Food and drink have  
a very practical role –  
providing nutrition to  
look after our bodies  
and energy to power us  
through the day.

Good food and drink are also woven into the fabric  
of European culture, with eating and drinking  
central to our time spent with friends and family.

However, today the nutritional balance has often  
been lost. More than half of the European adult  
population and a third of children are overweight  
or obese, while malnutrition in all of its forms  
remains a major challenge.

Given the food and drink manufacturing industry  
helps provide 1.5 billion meals in Europe every day,  
it also has an important role to help consumers  
achieve a balanced, healthy and sustainable diet.





## The targets:

1. Healthy, balanced and sustainable diets for all European consumers
2. Reverse malnutrition and diet-related health conditions
3. A food environment that makes it easier to choose healthy and sustainable diets

## Our commitments:

### Establish a Nutrition Action Project

The Nutrition Action Project is a new dedicated FoodDrinkEurope workstream to develop concrete activities and partnerships to help food and drink businesses meet targets on nutrition, safety and healthier living. Current activities:

- FoodDrinkEurope will develop new guidelines on food innovation and reformulation to help manufacturers, particularly SMEs, with practical tools to reformulate and innovate their products.
- FoodDrinkEurope will publish updated guidelines on legibility of labelling to help manufacturers to comply with the legal requirement to provide legible information on packs.

The Nutrition Action Project will also focus on other important topics including the food environment, food information, portions and advertising.

### Update and disseminate food safety guidelines

Food and drink cannot be healthy if it is not safe. EU food safety standards are the highest in the world and FoodDrinkEurope will continue to guide businesses to reach ever higher standards. We recently published new guidelines on [food allergen management](#), and we continue to update and promote our [acrylamide toolbox](#) and [guidance on food contamination](#).

### Inspire businesses with the SME Healthier Living Award

The very best food and drink companies are developing innovative solutions to help improve the health of consumers.

FoodDrinkEurope has established [The Foodies](#), a competition to find Europe's most sustainable SMEs, including a Healthier Living Award for those companies most committed to helping consumers achieve a more balanced and healthier diet.

FoodDrinkEurope will showcase the finalists and winners as part of its efforts to inspire and guide the industry towards more sustainable food systems.

## Our policy asks:

To facilitate a swift transition towards healthier and more sustainable diets, the food and drink industry urges policymakers to prioritise the following areas:

- **Improve food information to consumers:** Consumers need clear and transparent information to choose a healthy and sustainable diet.
- **Support innovation:** The European regulatory process should inspire consumer confidence for business investment in new products for healthier diets. At the same time, regulatory bottlenecks to innovation should be identified and eliminated to ensure innovative processes, technologies and products can be introduced onto the market as soon as possible.
- **Maintain the Single Market:** Policy measures around nutrition and health should be harmonised across the EU to avoid consumer confusion and additional financial and logistical burdens on business, particularly SMEs.
- **Ensure evidence-based policy:** Avoid unfounded discrimination of products, ingredients, methods and processes. Invest in reliable, comparable, up-to-date pan-European dietary consumption intake data.
- **Recognise the benefits:** While challenges exist, acknowledge that processed food and drinks are one essential tool to deliver sustainable food systems, providing all consumers – from vegan to meat eater and everything in between – with products to suit their lifestyle and meet their dietary needs.

To learn more about FoodDrinkEurope's detailed policy positions on EU legislative proposals around packaging and the circular economy please contact [info@fooddrink europe.eu](mailto:info@fooddrink europe.eu).

## Company case studies:

FoodDrinkEurope's members have developed a range of initiatives to deliver on healthier living on topics including [nutrition](#), [labelling](#), [lifestyles](#) and [advertising](#).

In addition, many food and drink companies have made healthier living commitments to the [Code of Conduct](#).





# INVESTMENT TO FINANCE THE CHANGE

Delivering on the [Code of Conduct](#)  
objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7



The transition to sustainable food systems will require significant investment to support the practices and innovations needed to transform the way we grow, manufacture and consume food and drink.

The private sector has a major role to help finance the change. Europe's food and drink manufacturing sector is made up of **289,000 businesses of all shapes and sizes and together they employ 4.5 million people and contribute around €1.2 trillion into the economy.** The EU is also the world's largest exporter and third largest importer of food and drink.

All EU food and drink businesses will need to be economically sustainable if they are to invest in a more sustainable future for their employees, for their consumers and for the planet.

The goal for FoodDrinkEurope is to help business to thrive because of their commitment to sustainable food systems, not despite it.







## Our commitments:

### Support sustainable economic growth, trade and investment

FoodDrinkEurope will continue to work on behalf of its members to call for an EU policy environment where social, environmental and economic sustainability are not only compatible, but absolutely 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.

To support these efforts, FoodDrinkEurope urges policymakers to maintain a fully functional and competitive Single Market and to support an ambitious EU trade policy.

### Invest in jobs through a Pact for Skills

Employing more than 4.5 million people, the food and drink manufacturing sector is Europe's leading employer.

FoodDrinkEurope has partnered with the EU farmer association Copa-Cogeca and a range of other stakeholders to develop a **Pact for Skills** – a partnership for the agri-food industry. The aim of the Pact, which was launched on 18 February 2022, 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.





# INNOVATION TO SPEED THE CHANGE

Delivering on the [Code of Conduct](#)  
objectives 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7



Research and innovation  
are key to making  
food systems more  
sustainable, resilient,  
inclusive and healthy.

While the food and drink industry is actively  
engaged in R&I, it cannot claim to have all the  
answers

for a sustainable food future. Public investment in  
collaborative R&I is essential to find new solutions  
to the challenges we are facing – such as tackling  
climate change, biodiversity loss and supporting  
more healthy and sustainable diets.

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





## Our commitments:

### Invest €250k into Food for Life research and innovation project up to 2027

FoodDrinkEurope has committed €250,000 over the next five years to support the European Technology Platform (ETP) "Food for Life" to 2027. The platform, led by academic and industry experts, will work 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 €2.9 billion in 2017/18.

### Provide expertise to multi-stakeholder platform partnerships

FoodDrinkEurope has committed to provide expertise on the [European Commission Sustainable Food System Partnership](#) to collectively develop and implement an EU-wide research and innovation agenda around sustainable food systems.

In addition, FoodDrinkEurope has committed to:

- Work alongside [23 partners](#) on the European Commission's [FoodSafety4EU](#) project to shape the food safety system of the future.
- Participate in FIELDS and I-RESTART, a collaborative ERASMUS+ project to identify existing and emerging skills needs in the food sector.
- 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.





# PARTNERSHIPS TO SCALE THE CHANGE

Delivering on the [Code of Conduct](#)  
objective 6



It is said that if you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together. The EU's ambitious sustainability goals can only be met if all actors work together.

The global food chain is a long and complex system with multiple players involved long before a farmer puts a seed in the ground and long after a consumer takes a bite of food.

The food manufacturing industry is right in the middle, and therefore has a vital coordinating role with players both up and down the food chain.

To make the food systems fit for the future, we need transformative partnerships between farmers, civil society, policymakers and businesses across multiple industries.

The goal for FoodDrinkEurope is to find and nurture partnerships that will help scale the change needed to move towards more sustainable food systems.





# Our commitments:

## Establish a Sustainable Food Systems Partnerships Programme

The FoodDrinkEurope Sustainable Food Systems Partnerships Programme is an open call for organisations that share our common goal for more sustainable food systems and a mindset for collaboration.

The programme has been initiated with new partnerships established around sustainable farming. In addition, FoodDrinkEurope continues to take a lead role in the signatories' group to the [Code of Conduct](#).

Partnerships will be a central element of FoodDrinkEurope's climate, packaging and nutrition action projects and we encourage all interested parties to get in touch at [info@fooddrinkeurope.eu](mailto:info@fooddrinkeurope.eu).

## Begin #FoodFuture dialogue project, part 2

In 2021 FoodDrinkEurope launched its #FoodFuture project, a listening exercise to hear from stakeholders about their vision for the future of food. This exercise engaged with more than 2,000 stakeholders and included 100 in-depth conversations to help us build this Action Plan for Sustainable Food Systems.

The listening does not stop. With #FoodFuture dialogue part two FoodDrinkEurope will engage with critical, as well as supportive, voices to build on the Action Plan and ensure it truly delivers on its objectives.





# MORE THAN FOOD PROJECT



While this Action Plan focuses on FoodDrinkEurope's external role towards more sustainable food and drink, we also believe that **sustainability starts at home.**

That's why we have launched our More than Food project to work in the local community, to take action for the good of our planet and to ensure support for each other's values, health and wellbeing.

## Our community

The FoodDrinkEurope secretariat has established a Community Action Team, leading on a number of initiatives including:

- A partnership with the Brussels-Brabant Food Bank which provides food security to 30,000 of the most vulnerable people in Brussels. We donated 2.5 tons of rice in 2021 and will at least match that commitment in 2022 with a range of fundraising activities.
- A commitment to donate up to 46 days to local charities each year as staff are actively encouraged to take two days every year to support community initiatives.
- An annual office run/walk to raise funds for a chosen good cause voted for by staff.
- Regular food collections for local NGOs.





# Our planet:

The FoodDrinkEurope secretariat has established a Planet Action Team, which is driving a more sustainable Brussels office with activities including:

- A net zero plan with a 25% carbon reduction target by 2025 and 45% reduction by 2030. The plan includes wider sustainability actions to reduce waste and ensure sustainable office sourcing. We are now **accredited as carbon neutral by CO2 Logic**.
- A partnership with Soil Capital, regenerative agriculture experts, that includes a 2022 investment to help farmers lock 50 tonnes of carbon into the soil. This is in addition to our carbon neutral certification making us a net positive organisation.



# Our people:

The FoodDrinkEurope secretariat has established a Happiness Action Team, providing opportunities for staff to concentrate on their own health and wellbeing, and to ensure the organisation is true to the values that are important to staff.





