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THE NEW SUSTAINABILITY REGULATION: HOW TO INTEGRATE IT INTO FOOD SAFETY?

Key insights from the FoodSafety4EU Pre-Forum 2022

full report: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7621172>

BACKGROUND

The new legislative framework for sustainable food systems is expected to be adopted by the Commission by the end of 2023. Its goal is to accelerate and ease the transition by integrating sustainability into all food-related policies. **Looking at the new framework from the food safety angle**, the FoodSafety4EU platform hosted a **multi-actor dialogue** to discuss present and future challenges to be addressed to ensure a safe transition towards increased sustainability.

Strongly committed to be part of and support this transition, the FoodSafety4EU platform members and stakeholders jointly identified key leading challenges for a **multi-actor implementation of the new sustainability framework** principles and objectives.



LEADING CHALLENGES

- Metrification of sustainability performance
- Strategic implementation in a longer timeframe
- Adequate funding and financial instruments
- Legal operationalisation and organisational capacity (at EU and Member State level)
- Complementing risk analysis with sustainability analysis
- Feeding regulatory science providing policy supporting results
- Considering food environment aspects (access to food)
- Implementing systemic approach and multi actor approach
- Innovating communication and education engaging with youngs
- Societal challenges: sustainability is a society choice

Contributors

Veronica MT Lattanzio, CNR ISPA, FS4EU Coordinator
Nunzia Cito, CNR ISPA – APRE
Todor Ivanov, EuroCoop
Fabrizio Fabbri, EuroCoop
Nastasia Belc, IBA
Jonas Lazaro Mojica, FoodDrinkEurope
Hanna Schebesta, Wageningen University & Research
Axel Mauroy, FAVV- AFSCA
Bruno Menne, COPA-COGECA

Antoine D'haese, SAFE Food Advocacy Europe
Angela Frigo, European Food Banks Federation
SAFECONSUME, Solveig Langsrud, Nofima
HUMYCO, Marthe De Boevre, Gent University
One Health EJP TOXOSOURCES, Pikka Jokelainen, Statens Serum Institut
TITAN, Isabelle Guelinckx, ILSI EU
HOLIFOOD, Maria Scherbov, EUFIC
FOODPATHS, Hugo de Vries, INRAE
EU-FORA 2022/2023 Celine Meerpoel, Gent University



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FOOD LAW

The framework law on Sustainable Food System should define principles, objectives, requirements, minimum standards, responsibilities or how the horizontal elements for sustainability analysis complement the existing risk analysis. This would require a longer implementation window: from Farm to Fork strategy to integration with the General Food Law. The **metrification of sustainability** should be the basis for any legal objectives, policy measures and actions.

INDUSTRY

EU's food safety is a shared responsibility, but it needs a logical and reasonable division. Main challenges arising from the **cross-over of regulations** are: excessive application of the precautionary principle; intensification of a hazard-based approach; the proliferation of national rules on food safety, leading to a patchwork; the existence of double regulation for certain chemicals; the decrease of impact assessments.

CONSUMERS

Consumers can play a key role in Sustainable Food System by reducing the food wasted, increasing vegetable protein intake, buying organic and locally grown food, increasing recycling. An adequate legal framework for a SFS should tackle overarching issues: fight food speculation, modulate incentives for bioenergy, internalise the negative externalities of food price, and ensure a level playing field among business models for food operators.

EU FOOD BANKS

36.2 million EU citizens cannot afford a quality meal every 2nd day. Ensuring food safety while fostering food donation is a priority for EU Food Banks, that advocate and support the implementation of hygiene practices to recover, collect, store, and redistribute food for charitable purposes while assuring food safety.

FS4EU YOUNGS

Young students raised important points for improvement of communication within a safe and Sustainable Food System: i) the need of well-designed social media campaigns to inform the public, ii) mandatory investment by food producing companies in their own communications and direct contact with food safety authorities, iii) rapid sharing of verified information.

FOOD SAFETY AUTHORITIES

Population growth will require getting the right trade-offs between sustainability, food security and food safety. These aspects must not be considered apart from food sovereignty and food equity. These overarching challenges are increasing the **complexity in risk analysis**. Feeding the **regulatory science** is of utmost importance to support the food safety authorities' mission.

AGRIFOOD SECTOR

New sustainability requirements are possible but need adequate support mechanisms. **Higher sustainability is a society choice**. If this transition is not managed strategically, farmers will go out of business and those who survive will concentrate the market share, externalisation of production to third countries, sustainability leakage, risk for food safety, because operators might be tempted to cut costs.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The new SFS framework law should ensure policy coherence, adopt a food environments approach, set time and legally binding targets, define strong accountability/performance mechanisms to monitor progress. Globally, 38% of edible food is lost/wasted. This could be reversed only if a comprehensive multi-stakeholder approach is implemented with ambitious targets, coherent implementation and rigid monitoring.

RESEARCH

i) Multidisciplinary collaboration is needed to fully exploit the huge potential of the stakeholders network in the food safety system; ii) combining research and communication innovation has the potential to change consumer habits; iii) systemic approach in the food safety system is essential and funding is critical.

