



fighting heart disease  
and stroke

european heart network

## **EHN response to the Commission Consultation ‘Sustainable Food - Farm to Fork Strategy’**

10 March 2020

The European Heart Network (EHN) welcomes the European Commission’s commitment to develop a Farm to Fork (FtF) Strategy for sustainable food in the framework of the European Green Deal. An effective strategy can contribute to reducing the burden of cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVD is the leading cause of death in the EU and a major cause of illness and disability. Unhealthy diets are a major contributor to CVD responsible for around half of the CVD burden in the EU at an estimated cost of €102 .

A cardiovascular health-promoting diet means a shift towards a more plant-based diet. It includes vegetables, fruit and berries in abundance. Whole grain products, nuts and seeds, fish, pulses, low-fat dairy products are also important, as are non-tropical vegetable oils in modest amounts. It entails limiting consumption of red meat, processed meat products and foods or drinks with low content of vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre and/or a high content of free sugars, saturated/trans fats or salt.

Many economic and policy drivers determine what food is produced, what is imported and how foods are marketed. These factors are well beyond the reach of individuals.

To that end, EHN recommends that the FtF strategy tackle a) the food supply side; b) the food demand side; as well as c) food composition.

### Recommendations for supply-side interventions:

- Establish a global food convention
- Reform agriculture and food policies to align with public health priorities
- Ensure trade and investment policies protect and promote public health

### Recommendations for demand-side interventions:

- Use taxes and/or subsidies
- Implement regulatory controls on marketing of unhealthy foods to children
- Adopt a nutrient profile for regulation of claims, mandatory simplified front-of-pack nutrition labelling and menu labelling

### Recommendations for food composition:

- Establish nutrition standards for food in schools, hospitals and other public institutions
- Implement wide-reaching ambitious food reformulation programmes

EHN further recommends that the FtF be underpinned by three overarching principles which necessitate:

- Implementing policies to tackle cardiovascular health inequality
- Ensuring that robust mechanisms for nutrition governance are in place and fit-for-purpose
- Developing an integrated health and environment approach promoting health-environment win-wins in food-based dietary guidelines

More information can be found in EHN's publication 'Transforming European food and drink policies for cardiovascular health' (document uploaded on this web page:

<http://www.ehnheart.org/publications-and-papers/publications/1093:transforming-european-food-and-drinks-policies-for-cardiovascular-health.html>).