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News | 21.02.2014

Join the Food Revolution Newsletter

Issue n°1 February 2014

- **GREEN INSIGHT INTO EU FOOD POLICY**
- EU rules on the labelling of meat: European Commission sent back to the drawing board
- Committee rejects draft seed regulation: 1st positive signal for seed diversity and food security
- GM maize 1507 authorisation: Commission insistence must be met with censure
- Vegetarian Union Act: urging the Commission to fulfil its obligation

- **FOOD FOR THOUGHT**
- The Food for Life Partnership: changing behaviour through knowledge, developing skills and engaging people.
- Labelling Matters campaign presented to the European Parliament
- *Farmageddon*: If you eat food this matters

- **JOIN THE FOOD REVOLUTION: THE STORY OF THE MONTH**
- Every month food actors who joined the 'Join the Food Revolution' network share their story, showing the way to take back control over your plate

- **WHAT'S ON THE PLATE?**
- Upcoming Events

GREEN INSIGHT INTO EU FOOD POLICY

EU rules on the labelling of meat: European Commission sent back to drawing board

A motion tabled by the Greens/EFA to reject new rules proposed by the European Commission on origin labelling for meat was endorsed in a European Parliament vote on 6 February. The Greens welcomed the outcome and called on the Commission to come forward with new and more comprehensive proposals.

Committee rejects draft seed regulation: 1st positive signal for seed diversity and food security

On 11th February the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development sent a positive signal in support of seed diversity and food security by voting in favour of a resolution calling for the rejection of the draft regulation on Seed production and marketing. Therefore, following a positive vote by the whole Parliament in plenary the content of the proposal would need to be seriously revised by the Commission.

The Greens/EFA Group asks that changes are made to give space in the law for diversity and sustainable agricultural systems. As part of its Food campaign the Greens/EFA group will keep pushing for this decisive outcome until the final vote in March.

- Read more
- See Greens/EFA study on Concentration of market power in the EU Seed market

GM maize 1507 authorisation: Commission insistence must be met with censure

On 12th February, following the decision in the EU General Affairs Council, in which a record number of 19 EU member states opposed the proposed authorisation of a new GM crop variety (GM maize 1507), EU health and consumer policy commissioner Tonio Borg indicated the Commission would nonetheless proceed with the authorisation. The Greens/EFA Group believes the European Parliament should censure the Commission if this occurs.

- Read more

Vegetarian Union Act : urging the European Commission to fulfill its obligation

Currently, there are no clear rules on when you can label foodstuffs as "vegetarian" or "vegan" at European level (e.g. juice containing gelatine might be found labelled as "vegetarian"). Therefore, the different existing labels with which vegetarian and vegan products are advertised in Europe do not provide consumers with legal certainty.

In some cases (e.g. the United Kingdom) there is a legal framework for voluntary labelling. The only Europe wide initiative is the V-label of the European Vegetarian Union (EVU). It is an approval sticker, for which companies need to fulfil certain conditions regarding the vegetarian and vegan products they sell. Compliance needs to be checked by EVU itself. The label is currently used by companies in 15 of the 28 Member States and in Norway.

The Food information Regulation, states that the European Commission (EC) shall adopt implementing acts in order to secure that food information provided on a voluntary basis as regards the suitability of a food for vegetarians or vegans is not misleading, ambiguous or confusing to the consumer. However, the EC did not present anything yet, and at request, it stated that no work is carried out currently, as it is not a priority issue.

Therefore, a group of MEPs from different political groups, including Greens/EFA MEP Rebecca Harms, proposed to request the EC to submit to the Parliament an appropriate proposal for the adoption of a new act on this issue.

This procedure called "Proposal for a Union Act" is a new instrument of the European Parliament which implements Article 225 of the Lisbon Treaty and is used here for the first time.

Parliament's Members have until 27th February to sign this proposal. If the proposal is signed by a majority of members, the committee for Environment (ENVI), responsible for matters on food labelling, will draw up a legislative own-initiative report, requesting the Commission to submit an appropriate proposal. There is no deadline in the Food information Regulation by which provisions on voluntary

labelling rules for vegetarian and vegan food need to be adopted. The Proposal for a Union Act thus urges the European Commission to swiftly fulfil its obligation and ensures that the topic won't be forgotten in the next legislative term.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The Food For Life Partnership: changing behaviour through knowledge, developing skills and engaging people.

On 19th February, Joe Harvey from the Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) was the special guest of the European Parliament's cross-party Food Steering Group, co-chaired by Greens/EFA MEP Bart Staes.

The Food for Life Partnership aims to reach out through schools to give communities access to seasonal, local and organic food, and to the skills they need to cook and grow fresh food. To do this, the Partnership brings together the expertise and enthusiasm of five food focused charities – the Soil Association, Focus on Food, Health Education Trust, Garden Organic and Royal Society for Public Health. But more importantly, it empowers innovative schools, teachers, caterers, food producers, pupils and health professionals to work together to create a better food culture and to involve their local communities all across England. This means a great meal service with healthy and sustainable food, practical food education and engaged pupils. The project has recently started to be implemented in universities, hospitals, and care homes as well.

Joe Harvey insisted on the importance of the holistic approach of the partnership. It does not only look at food provision but also at changing behaviour through knowledge, developing skills and engaging people involved in the decision process.

Regarding the EC Communication on Sustainable Food, to be published in March, food waste should not be the only focus of this paper. Indeed from FFDL's perspective waste is a by-product of bad procurement, low quality food services and lack of engagement of consumers. If you get these aspects rights, waste becomes a minor issue. Therefore, EU should recommend to all governments to engage in high quality food services and sustainable procurement and to recognise local solutions as key to innovation and delivery.

A first step in the right direction is the vote on new rules for public procurement by the European Parliament last January. This new rules provide greater legal certainty and, at the same time, give greater playing room for local authorities as regards their public procurement choices. Therefore, this can ensure public procurement can be more effectively used to promote more small and medium size providers from sustainable and ethical sectors, such as Food for Life.

- Watch More on the Food For Life Partnership

Labelling Matters campaign presented to the European Parliament

On 17th February the European Parliament welcomed an event to present the Labelling Matters campaign. This partnership project coordinated by Compassion in World Farming, RSPCA, Soil Association and World Society for the Protection of Animals, campaigns for method of production labelling, underpinned with robust outcome-based assessments, for all meat and dairy products sold in the EU. Labelling Matters represents over 9 million EU consumers. This event was an opportunity for to identify common ways to further objectives of this campaign to the benefit of both EU consumers and EU farm animals.

- Read More on this project

Farmageddon: If you eat food this matters

Compassion in World Farming CEO, Philip Lymbery has joined award-winning journalist Isabel Oakeshott to tell the story of the madness of our current food system.

This story is compiled in the recently released book *Farmageddon: The True Cost of Cheap Meat*. Fascinating and terrifying in equal measure, *Farmageddon* documents an investigative journey behind the closed doors of the factory farming industry. It busts the myth that factory farming is needed to feed the world. With stories from all around the world, the book shows that none of us are safe from the factory farming machine. *Farmageddon* is both a wake-up call to change our current food production and eating practices and an attempt to find a way to a better farming future.

On 18th February, the Greek Presidency of the European Union and Compassion in World Farming organised the joint conference: 'Averting Farmageddon: Sustainable Food for All'.
Parallel to the book, this event focused on the negative impacts of intensive animal agriculture on people, the planet and animals and called for sustainable alternatives.

JOIN THE FOOD REVOLUTION: THE STORY OF THE MONTH

Every month a food actor who joined the 'Join the Food Revolution' network share its story, paving the way to take back control over your plate –

Magalie Boutemy, Cook and Restaurant owner at L'EPICERIE, Brussels.

At L'Epicerie, Magalie serves you lunch, with quality food, made of fresh, natural and organic products. You can eat in or take away if short of time.
Every day Magalie offers you the choice between a single dish cooked on site and a sandwich, not to mention the home made dessert.
Among the specialties: Magalie's famous Belgian meatloaf cooked in various ways depending on the mood of the owner, the cream of vegetables, sautéed smoked sausage with lentils, pancakes with salted butter.

- More on Magalie and l'EPICERIE
- Click here to Join the Food Revolution

WHAT'S ON THE PLATE?

26/02: Plenary vote on Plant Breeding: What options to increase quality and yields

The draft report stated how much new breeding techniques, such as GMO and gene stacking, are needed. It is part of the strategy of the pro-GM propaganda to launch its new offensive for the new legislature. The Greens/EFA Group is amending the draft report against these aspects.

27/02: International Seminar on Organic Farming, Paris, France.

4/03: Seminar: An Exploration into Sufficiency-based Business Models in the Food Sector, Paris, France.

4-6/03: As part of the International Year of Family Farming: Global Forum and Expo on Family farming, Budapest, Hungary.

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Opinion

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