

# ALL CHANGE



## 2019 will bring political changes in the EU but how will it affect the food sector and especially our industry? Sebastian Emig polishes up his crystal ball

**WITH** the big B-word looming and infesting all news and social media channels in Europe, to a certain extent the upcoming elections to a new European Parliament go somewhat unnoticed. Only in EU specialised media can one read about the new Spitzenkandidaten or get more information via sponsored tweets by the European Parliament. I don't want to undermine the importance of the potential divorce of the UK from Europe - personally I am still not convinced that it really is going to happen - but the elections to the European Parliament could have more far-reaching consequences across the Continent than a controlled or un-controlled Brexit.

With the current questionable trend towards nationalism in European Member States, it is very likely that we will see a shift towards left and right extremes in the election this May. What does this actually mean for policy making? In terms of finding majorities to pass a bill through Parliament it will become more challenging; and this might be true for nearly all topics, bearing in mind that some of the groups in the Parliament are profoundly anti-EU. In terms of advocacy we will be put into a difficult position as well. Do we as a sector want to consider working together with Parliamentarians that are not supporting the core principles of the European Union (such as the Single Market) and are advocating to dissolve the EU?

I don't believe that we will see a landslide win of extremists and anti-EU parties in the election. However, these groups will become a force in

Parliament that will ask for some of their requests to be taken into account - even if only as part of a bargaining battle. As ESA, we will continue with our positive messages about our products and sector and will further continue to educate Parliamentarians, regardless of their political colour.

Besides the European Parliament, we will also see a new Cabinet of European Commissioners being sworn in end of this year. Looking back at the last five years of the Juncker Commission with a focus on food and nutrition, I must say that we broadly appreciated their approach towards topics around food safety. However, we - along with other players in the food sector - have been concerned with the Commission's non-action with regards to the proliferation of interpretative nutritional labels that are getting more traction, such as the UK Traffic Light or the French NutriScore. The big majority of the food industry was unhappy with the row about the alleged dual quality of food, where some Member States claimed an East-West divide between products sold on the respective markets.

What else can we expect in this 'short' political year? We will certainly see further pressure on single-use plastics, as well as on front of pack labelling, where the Commission is supposed to come out with a holistic report on existing systems spread across several EU countries. But mostly this year will focus on the elections, with new members of Parliament coming in and looking for orientation and

a reshuffle of Commission civil servants finding themselves in new roles that also need education.

Summarising, I think it was a good political term for our sector concerning legislation and perception; maintaining a high permissibility of our products within a healthy and balanced diet. We are looking forward to working as productively and positively with the soon-to-be-in-power EU institutions and its members for the years to come with the great support of our members.

### SNACKEX LOOKS INTO SNACKIFICATION OF LIVES

Have you marked the 27 and 28 June this year in your calendar? If you didn't do so yet, you certainly should. And the place to be is Barcelona! In the process of registering exhibition stands we have already been booked out three times - a new record! We now have some final stand space left, and if you want to book, you should do it fast. We already have over 150 exhibitors from more than 30 countries.

The conference programme is clustered around the theme 'Snackification - Grasp the Business Opportunities' and will feature as key-note speaker the digital customer expert Steven van Belleghem. He will kick off the conference with his focus presentation on 'Portioning lives and meals - snackification as the new normal'. So, if you're asking yourself what snackification really means, we would like to offer you some insights. With the ongoing erosion of traditional meal patterns and eating

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We welcome worldwide membership from any company with an interest in the European savoury snack and nut sector.

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The voice of the industry in Europe

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occasions in a state of flux, snackification is at the centre of consumer behaviour, with consumers willing to try new tastes, new ingredients and new product types. And they are willing to pay a premium if they taste good.

Savoury snacks have shown strong volume growth over recent years, often outperforming other snack products. But snackification is driving change in consumer purchasing patterns, creating huge opportunities for savoury snack makers – and huge challenges too.

Savoury snacks must meet multiple requirements, including convenience, portability, innovation, nutrition and health, versatility, variety and the memorable 'WOW effect'.

Whatever the snack, transparency plays a significant role in snacking choices. With an emphasis on better-for-you snacking, consumers are conscious of a snack's ingredient list and check to see if the list is recognisable and easy to understand. This holds true for even indulgent snacking.

The proliferation of new snack product types and brands has made the traditional bagged snacks retail snacking space intensely competitive and the fight for shelf-space, as well as online space, is tougher than ever. Globally, consumers have increasing access to technology and information and, as a result, are demanding more of everything, including individual product customisation, service and corporate accountability – not to mention value.

Hence, snackification has become one of the biggest drivers of change and opportunity in the food industry, and our sector sits at the crossroads of this development.

So if you're looking to explore this and other highly relevant topics, along with an exhibition that will present cutting-edge technologies for the production, processing and packaging of savoury snacks and snack nuts, as well as many new flavours and trends, you will find what you're searching for in Barcelona.

SNACKEX is a unique opportunity for industry professionals to buy, sell and network with top management and key decision-makers from all classes of trade including snack manufacturers, importers, exporters, suppliers, nut traders, retailers, distributors and brokers.

## NEW YEAR – NEW OPPORTUNITIES!

After a tremendous 2018 – in terms of regulatory activities, reputation and visibility - my team and I want to thank you, dear members, for your great support. With your ongoing help we are confident that whatever 2019 throws at us, we will tackle and overcome it in order to further protect your interests and promote the European savoury snacks sector. ■

Director General Sebastian Emig\*

\*in his capacity as permanent representative of PrimeConsulting BXLBCN SL