

# GREEN DEAL marks a 'GIANT LEAP' for EU



**As the EU sets out ambitious plans to address sustainability from farm to fork, Sebastian Emig considers how the savoury snacks industry can respond**

**THE** European Commission unveiled The European Green Deal at the beginning of December last year. This is an ambitious roadmap “for making the EU’s economy sustainable by turning climate and environmental challenges into opportunities across all policy areas and making the transition just and inclusive for all”. How important is it? The new President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, described it in a video as “Europe’s man on the moon moment”.

The initiative is being complemented by a document outlining key actions aimed at putting Europe on track to reach net-zero global warming emissions by 2050. Reversing biodiversity loss and cutting pollution are also among the main priorities of the deal, along with looking into the investments and financing tools that will be needed to help ensure a just and inclusive transition. It covers all sectors of the economy, such as transport, energy, agriculture and buildings, as well as industries as varied as steel, cement, ICT, textiles, chemicals and so on.

Most relevant for our sector, the Green Deal will be the backdrop to the new Farm-to-Fork strategy, whose scope will encompass every step of the food chain, from production and processing through marketing, as well as consumption

and international trade. The Farm-to-Fork strategy will be presented as a white paper very soon.

The Health and Food Safety Commissioner, Stella Kyriakides, anticipates that efforts to make the entire food supply chain more sustainable will be combined with the promotion of healthy choices and healthy living through a system of clear food labelling. “By the end of this Commission’s mandate, I want the sustainable choice to be the easy and the obvious choice,” she said before claiming that “What is healthy for our planet is also healthy for our citizens.”

She also opened the door to food producers by saying that the sustainability goals cannot be met without them on-board: “I want to make sure that this strategy accounts for the needs and concerns of all the different actors involved, in particular farmers.”

Some cynics claim that the proclamation of the Green Deal paints a utopian picture of the European project that is intended to draw attention away from other – potentially more intractable – issues such as uncontrolled immigration, eroding social systems, rising youth unemployment or the political detachment of voters. In other words, because Europe is threatened by a failure to preserve its internal unity and democratic identity, it is resorting to saving the

world as a substitute.

In answering these critics, von der Leyen cannot hide the fact that the EU must come up with meaningful and sustainable answers to its internal existential problems. And with the forthcoming tough negotiations among EU governments on the concrete implementation of the ambitious climate targets at the national level, the harsh reality of maintaining unity within the fractious European family will soon become visible again for the new Commission President.

Even so, an effective transition to sustainable food systems requires solutions that go beyond ‘business as usual’, reviewing the way food is produced, packed, transported and consumed. It requires addressing bravely the three pillars of sustainability in a coherent, consistent and integrated manner throughout the entire food chain and at all geographical levels. Moving towards sustainable food systems also needs a holistic and coordinated approach from farm to fork, involving policymakers, public authorities, civil society, academics and the private sector.

Climate change has crucial implications for our planet and citizens, and for the sustainability and competitiveness of our industry. Finally putting the environment and how humans are interacting with it front and centre

of the debate for the next few years will hopefully help bring about a circular economy and a carbon-neutral Europe.

Such a clear commitment from the European legislator raises several important questions for us as an industry. Where does the savoury snacks industry stand? Where can we say that our members have already done their homework and are performing as best-in-class? Which areas of our activity can be improved in order to create a more sustainable future?

We will look into topics such as waste handling, energy use, recycling, packaging and many more related issues. Our aim is to demonstrate that the entire value chain within the savoury snacks sector is already one of the most responsible and sustainable within the context of the wider food and beverage industry.

We are excited to learn more about the EU Green Deal and the Farm-to-Fork strategy and look forward to working with the EU

institutions to create a sustainable future. We urge policymakers to drive an ambitious political framework based on the Better Regulation approach of evidence, economic impact, best practice and effective, inclusive solutions that ensure everyone in the value chain takes responsibility. We must also play our part in pressing for policies that are fit for purpose.

### ESA EVENTS

We are keenly looking forward to our course on 'Chips and snacks: raw material to formed products', which will take place in Florence, Italy, on 20-22 April this year. Places are limited and we have only a few seats left. If you want to take part in this unique opportunity to learn and share best practices, you'd be wise not to hesitate any longer.

Furthermore, stand sales are now open for the SNACKEX 2021, the only trade show dedicated to savoury snacks and snack nuts. This time it will take place on 16-17

June 2021 in Hamburg, Germany. Over 70% of the stand floor is already sold and the best spots for your booth are melting away as we speak, so book quickly.

### NEW YEAR - NEW OPPORTUNITIES!

After a tremendous 2019 - in terms of regulatory activities, reputation, visibility and the most successful SNACKEX ever - we are looking with confidence at the beginning of a new decade! With your ongoing support we are confident that whatever this year will throw 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\*  
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