



Statement by Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis ahead of World Food Day: Healthy Diets for a Zero Hunger world

Brussels, 16 October 2019

The proverbial saying 'you are what you eat' that comes from the French (*quelle surprise!*) lawyer and politician Anthelme Brillat-Savarin is to be taken quite literally. It brings us the notion that to be healthy you need to eat healthy food. It is true because our nutrition provides life to every cell in our body, from hair to skin, from bones to muscles.

This year's theme for the World Food Day "Healthy Diets for a Zero Hunger world" allows me to add a second layer to the famous saying: you are not only what you eat but also what you waste. Indeed, while we are tackling the unhealthy diets, food waste should be no less important *fish to fry*.

The numbers are more than alarming and terribly shameful: while over 800 million people suffer from hunger worldwide, over 670 million adults and 120 million children (aged 5–19) are obese, and Europeans waste 88 million tonnes of food each year – amounting to over €140 billion. Can you spot the error?

It seems obvious that food waste must be tackled. The UN Sustainable Development Goals set out the aim to halve food waste at retail and consumer level by 2030, and reduce food losses across production and supply chains. The Commission has put in place several initiatives to work towards this goal such as the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, which aims to support all actors in defining measures needed to prevent food waste and sharing best practices. In December, this Platform will publish its recommendations for action to prevent food loss and waste.

I have made the promotion of healthy lifestyles and the reduction of food waste central to my mandate during these past 5 years and I am confident that the good work we have done will be built upon also beyond my mandate.

We should continue working on initiatives that focus on positive lifestyle choices by encouraging healthy nutrition. We must provide our citizens with healthier food products, better protect our children from over-exposure to the marketing of unhealthy foods, while encouraging public procurement of healthy food, not only in schools but in other public health settings as well. The well-known, and widely used, 'EU school fruit, vegetables and milk' scheme is an example of positive steps the Commission is taking in this area: reaching 20 million children during the 2017/2018 school year.

Healthy lifestyles should also be encouraged. As many Member States are taking steps to introduce additional nutritional and origin labelling, the Commission recently launched a project on food reformulation, which provides Member States with a comprehensive database containing ingredient information on food products sold in EU supermarkets. This will make it clear to authorities, consumers and companies that there is room for improving food products: by highlighting the high sugar, salt and fat contents. This will also lead, I believe, to more positive, informed choices by consumers while allowing authorities to monitor progress in this area and take further steps if needed.

Healthy diets from sustainable food systems for a healthy planet should be our goal and our consumption patterns need to adapt. This will need to be part of the Farm to Fork Strategy and tie in the new Green Deal. What we eat and what we waste, will, to a large extent, define the future of our kind and our planet.

STATEMENT/19/6111

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