

Press release

5 July 2021

Retailers and wholesalers sign Farm-to-Fork Code of Conduct

EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren, Independent Retail Europe Director-General Else Groen and Euro Coop Secretary-General Todor Ivanov announced today that they had signed the EU Code of Conduct under the Farm to Fork Strategy, and issued the following joint statement:

“We are happy to have signed today an EU Code of Conduct which covers objectives our sector has long committed to and is actively pursuing. Our signatures and the commitments of our member associations and companies reflect our support of the transition to sustainable food systems, recognising and building on the many initiatives our sector already has in place. It also signals our commitment under this code to further engagement and continued dialogue with other actors in the supply chain.

Such dialogue will be important in contributing to the code’s objectives – no one part of the supply chain can do so alone, and we supported the Commission’s inclusive approach in involving all interested stakeholders across the supply chain. We all want to see consumers benefit from more access to sustainably-produced food and make the healthy choice. We will promote the code and share good practice, and we call upon the Commission to facilitate the dialogue foreseen in the code.

An important element in making the code succeed, and to attract as many players as possible, is to match it with what all sectors involved can actually deliver. The voluntary and aspirational nature of the code can make this happen. We also welcome that it adopts an approach tailored to this, and foresees special arrangements for SMEs. The companies can thus decide voluntarily on actions in line with their scale and business model and strategies, and based on consultations with their suppliers and customers.

Retailers and wholesalers of all sizes have been in the forefront of driving the sustainability of their own operations and the products they offer. They have launched initiatives all over Europe to drive and support sustainable production and consumption by working with their suppliers, supporting farmers in moving to organic and other sustainable production methods, and engaging consumers in embracing responsible consumption and sustainable lifestyles through innovative offerings, particularly their own brands. We therefore welcome that these many initiatives can be reflected in signatories’ commitments as the basis of their continued engagement.

Many examples of what our sector is doing to achieve a sustainable supply chain are available on:

- [EuroCommerce #SustainableCommerce website](#)
- [Independent Retail Europe website](#)
- [Euro Coop website”](#)

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[EuroCommerce](#) is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 31 countries and 5.4 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale provide a link between producers and 500 million European consumers over a billion times a day. It generates 1 in 7 jobs, providing a varied career for 29 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.

Established in 1963, [Independent Retail Europe](#) is the European association that acts as an umbrella organisation for groups of independent retailers in the food and non-food sectors. Our members are groups of independent retailers, associations representing them as well as wider service organizations built to support independent retailers. Independent Retail Europe represents 24 groups and associations and their 380,980 independent retailers, who manage more than 757,000 points of sale in urban and rural areas across the whole of the EU, with a combined retail and wholesale turnover of over a trillion euros. This represents a total employment of more than 6,486,000 persons.

[Euro Coop](#) unites 19 national organisations of consumer co-operatives in Europe, representing 30 million consumer-members, 7,000 local co-operatives, 700,000 employees and operating 94,000 points of sale. Consumer co-operatives are enterprises with a distinct model of ownership and governance, which, since 1844, have been operating according to the co-operative principles such as voluntary and open membership (Principle 1) and democratic member control (Principle 2) based on the rule of 1 member-1 vote. Being owned and managed by their members, consumer co-operatives have an inherent responsibility far-reaching past the cash register, such as care for the community (Principle 7) and all its social, economic and environmental facets.

