

Press Release

European Commission workshop confirms positive effect of Retail Alliances for consumers and no negative impact on SMEs and farmers

Brussels, 11 December 2025 - At the Commission's workshop on Retail Alliances, key findings of the [2020 JRC report](#) were reconfirmed: no evidence of negative impacts on SMEs or farmers, and clear consumer benefits. New evidence highlights the crucial role of European and national alliances and groups of independent retailers in ensuring competition, choice and market diversity fully consistent with the 2023 EU Horizontal Guidelines and the 2020 JRC report.

A workshop organised by DG AGRI and the Joint Research Centre (JRC), with the involvement of DG competition, brought together representatives from across the food supply chain as part of the Commission's update of the 2020 JRC report on Retail Alliances. Independent Retail Europe and its members actively contributed to the discussions with concrete evidence.

Concretely, the workshop broadly reconfirmed the main findings of the 2020 JRC study:

- European Retail Alliances **do not purchase from farmers or SMEs**, but interact exclusively with large international FMCG manufacturers.
- Alliances in their different forms **deliver clear consumer benefits**, including lower prices, greater choice, and improved product quality.
- No negative **indirect effects** were identified for farmers or SMEs; in fact, new modelling shows mostly **positive indirect impacts**, notably through market-expansion effects.
- Groups of independent retailers play a fundamental role in keeping markets competitive, enabling smaller retailers to thrive, while supporting local and regional producers.

Director General of Independent Retail Europe, Else Groen said: *"We believe in evidence-based policymaking. Today's Commission workshop showed that Retail Alliances have an overall positive impact for consumers by limiting the dominant market power of wealthy international FMCG giants. Evidence also showed that European and national Retail Alliances do not interact with farmers or SMEs, while the different models of ERAs, national alliances and groups of independent retailers help maintain a diverse and competitive retail landscape. Evidence is now mounting as to the positive net effects of these alliances in their diversity, confirming the key conclusions of the previous JRC report."*

European Retail Alliances (ERAs) bring together retail groups to negotiate jointly with large international FMCG manufacturers- **not** with farmers or SMEs. They operate exclusively upstream with multinational suppliers to rebalance bargaining power and generate efficiencies.

Evidence presented at the workshop confirms **no indirect negative effects** on farmers or SME manufacturers. Economic modelling reveals **positive impacts** in competitive agricultural markets and no evidence supporting any presumption of harm in other market configurations. In most cases, lower consumer prices generate **demand-expansion effects**, which in turn produce **positive indirect outcomes** for farmers.

For consumers and suppliers, the benefits remain clear: alliances help retailers secure **lower prices**, **more choice**, and **higher quality**, while enabling them to reinvest savings locally - supporting fresh, regional assortment and community services. Suppliers benefit from **lower transactional costs**, reliable volumes, and opportunities for innovation.

The evidence aligns with both the [2023 Horizontal Guidelines](#) and the [2020 JRC conclusions](#).

National alliances enable regional and local retail groups to negotiate on fair terms with large international manufacturers, while helping preserve competitive balance within national markets.

Groups of independent retailers, a distinct and essential model, allow local and smaller retailers to cooperate so as to remain competitive against international chains. They strengthen local economies through short supply chains, regional differentiation, and direct sourcing opportunities for farmers and SMEs, which is essential for maintaining market diversity.

Next steps: The workshop's conclusions will inform the upcoming **2026 Commission study** and any potential revision of the **Unfair Trading Practices Directive (UTP)**. Independent Retail Europe calls for **evidence-based policy** and clear **differentiation between alliance models**.

Annex:

- [European Retail Alliances: a short explanation of what they are, how they operate and what they bring](#) (Independent Retail Europe, 2024)
- Links: [2020 JRC Report](#); [2023 EU Horizontal Guidelines](#)

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About Independent Retail Europe:

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 their over 501.000 independent retailers, who manage more than 764.000 sales outlets, with a combined retail turnover of more than 1,411 billion euros and generating a combined wholesale turnover of 621 billion euros. This represents a total employment of more than 6.440.000 persons.

