Independent Retail Europe

# Statement

## November cyberattacks on supermarkets prove resilience of food retail and show that the food supply chain must be ready for new threats

Independent Retail Europe is following closely the recent wave of cyberattacks affecting food retailers across several European countries. These incidents, which targeted refrigeration systems of food retailers, have significantly disrupted store operations and caused significant financial losses to affected retail businesses.

Investigations are ongoing and it will take time to understand fully the origin of these attacks and the vulnerabilities exposed. The incidents have affected food retailers operating under different business models - integrated chains, franchises, and groups of independent retailers – showing that this attack targeted simultaneously hundreds of separate companies (i.e. in the case of groups of independent retailers, shops are typically operated by independent entrepreneurs), in a context where for reasons of efficiency refrigeration is usually managed by specialised service providers.

Despite the scale of the attack, the number of affected stores is small in relation to the total number of food retail shops, **access to food was therefore never compromised**: consumers always had access to other food retail stores in their area. The diversity of the business models in the sector, coupled with the equally diverse decentralised management of refrigeration, proves to be an asset for the resilience of the food retail sector as a whole.

**Moreover, there is already a strong EU framework for strengthening cybersecurity and improving the security of connected devices in the food supply chain** through the recent NIS2 Directive, the Critical Entities Resilience Directive and the Cyber Resilience Act. Effective implementation is essential to ensure these extensive rules translate into high cyber resilience on the ground, while taking into account the capacities of SME retailers.

**These incidents should serve as a wake-up call for the food supply chain as a whole: cyber-attacks are not limited anymore to data hacks and ransomware.** Safeguarding the resilience of Europe's food supply also requires protecting the technologies and infrastructure on which retailers depend to safely store, distribute and provide food to consumers.

Independent Retail Europe stands in solidarity with affected retailers and will continue supporting its members and the wider independent retail sector in this challenging time.

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**Independent Retail Europe** defends the interests of the independent retail sector. Our members are groups of independent retailers and associations representing these groups and representing independent retailers. Independent Retail Europe represents 24 groups and associations and their over 479.000 independent retailers, who manage more than 708.000 sales outlets, with a combined retail turnover of more than 1,446 billion euros and generating a combined wholesale turnover of 657 billion euros. This represents a total employment of more than 6.300.000 persons in the EU.