

# Call for tenders

## Consumption-side policy & legislative levers for the transition to sustainable diets

**Deadline for applications: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

### Context

Unhealthy and unsustainable diets in the EU are causing a large burden of ill health as well as driving unsustainable production and trading patterns. The European Commission's Farm to Fork Strategy recognises the need to shift to more plant-based diets in the EU, and the need to do so by making sustainable and healthy choices the easy choices by reshaping 'food environments'. However, the Strategy only puts forward very few specific actions aimed at shifting food consumption patterns: sustainability and nutrition labelling, voluntary commitments by businesses in a 'Code of Conduct', and the possibility of setting new mandatory minimum criteria and targets for sustainable food procurement.

The European Environmental Bureau advocates for a shift to healthy and sustainable diets based on higher consumption of local and seasonal fruits and vegetables, and "less and better" animal products, in line with the transition to agroecology which we advocate for in food production. Our policy focus has however so far been on production-side levers through agricultural policy, climate policy, etc.

The new "Farm to Fork" approach to food policy in the EU and forthcoming Sustainable Food Systems Law (legislative proposal expected in 2023) bring new opportunities to develop an ambitious policy and legislative framework to drive the needed dietary shift in the EU, addressing the "consumption side" by reshaping food environments.

We are therefore seeking experts who could conduct a review of the existing academic and grey literature about policy instruments which could be deployed at EU level to shift consumer lifestyles with a view to promote a transition to "agroecological diets".

### *Agroecological diets*

A large-scale dietary shift embedded in a transition to agroecology would involve large reductions in animal proteins consumption and increases in fruit, veg, and legumes consumption. However, unlike other scenarios which favour monogastric animals (chickens and pigs) over ruminants (cows, sheep, goats), an agroecological diet would see the largest decrease in chicken and pork consumption, as these animals compete with humans for their food (grains), whereas ruminants can be reared extensively on grasslands (although at much lower density than currently in many parts of Europe). This was modelled in the [TYFA scenario](#) and the [EEB climate pathway study](#).

### *Food environment*

The EEB rejects the idea that food policy should focus on promoting 'responsible consumer choices'. This model places considerable responsibility on citizens and consumers to make the 'right' food choices, based on information provision (e.g. labelling, education) or prompts to adopt 'green' and 'healthy' lifestyles. However, evidence is overwhelming that people's food choices are constrained and shaped by a whole range of external physical, economic, political and socio-cultural influences –

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collectively called the “food environment”. Following from that, it is clear that the most effective and equitable way to change food behaviours is to change the structural factors that drive food choices. Food environments are shaped in particular by seven “entry points”: food characteristics, labelling, promotion, provision, retail, prices and trade. Currently, these seven dimensions are mostly determined by commercial interests, with actors in the ‘middle’ of the food chain playing the biggest role – such as retailers, manufacturers, food service industries (e.g. restaurants, fast food chains, catering services), advertisers and other economic operators, including delivery services. We therefore believe those actors should be at the centre of attention for creating healthy and sustainable food environments. Policy-makers should set the ‘rules of the game’ for food business operators, targeting food environments, not consumers. How exactly that is best done in an effective and equitable way, is what we wish to explore through a review of existing literature.

## Research focus and questions

The main research questions are:

What policy and legislative instruments are available to EU policymakers to shape food environments? Which are found to be most effective? Are there negative impacts on lower income groups, and how can those be mitigated?

We expect the review to include at least the following areas, for which we would like a further analysis of specific ways in which these levers can be implemented for sustainability purposes, where possible identifying the strengths and weaknesses of different options:

- Regulation of marketing and promotion practices
- Fiscal policy such as tax regimes and other mechanisms influencing relative food pricing (specific implementation options for example: VAT, additional excise tax on specific products or nutrients, minimum unit pricing...)
- Duties on food chain actors (with a focus on large businesses) to align their business model and practices to the dietary transition
- Sustainability labelling and/or certification

The research should draw on real-life examples and academic proposals of policy and legislative instruments put in place in the food sector and beyond (e.g. circular economy) for health or sustainability purposes.

## Timeline

First draft: end of April 2022

Final draft: end of May 2022

## Budget

5,000 – 8,000 EUR

## How to apply

Please submit your technical offer to Isabel Paliotta, EEB Associate Policy Officer for Sustainable food systems, [isabel.paliotta@eeb.org](mailto:isabel.paliotta@eeb.org)