

## ENSA deploras the decision of the European Parliament not to support plant-based alternatives to dairy in the milk & fruit school scheme



**Brussels, 14 March 2016. – The European Natural Soy and Plant-Based Foods Manufacturers Association (ENSA) regrets the decision of the European Parliament to adopt an incomplete report on the aid scheme for the supply of fruit, vegetables, bananas and milk in schools, which allows the distribution of processed foods and flavoured dairy products with added sugars but completely excludes healthy and resource-efficient plant-based drinks which have a lower total sugar content than milk.**

One of the objectives of the aid scheme is to promote healthy eating habits among school children and educate them about healthy foods. Yet soy drinks, which are nutritionally equivalent to cow’s milk and are lower in total sugars and saturated fat than dairy, are not eligible to be included in the scheme. In comparison: semi-skimmed milk contains 4.7g of sugars (lactose) per 100 ml, while a plain soy drink has only 2.5 g of sugars per 100 ml.

In this context it is even more surprising that the European Parliament has voted to allow dairy products with high amounts of sugars such as chocolate-flavoured milk to be eligible under this scheme as an example of healthy food. The total sugar content of a chocolate-flavoured dairy milk is approximately 11 g/100 ml, as compared to the total sugar content of a chocolate-flavoured soy drink which is 7.5 g/100 ml.

This decision contradicts the current efforts of the European Commission and member states to curb the excessive sugar intake of the European population in order to reduce obesity. Moreover, this decision promotes discrimination among similar food products which serve the same needs and have the same nutritional value.

Plant-based alternatives to dairy are consumed by a lot of children in Europe and make up part of a healthy and balanced children’s diet. Educating children about plant-based foods in schools is completely in line with the scheme’s objective of promoting healthy eating habits.

The government of the Netherlands has already condemned this decision saying that subsidising foods with high sugar content is *“irresponsible”*. ENSA calls on EU member states to consider implementing measures at the national level to prevent the promotion of products with high amounts of sugars, and to educate children about the environmental and health benefits of plant-based foods.

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### About ENSA

Established in January 2003, ENSA represents the interests of natural soy and plant-based food manufacturers in Europe. The term “natural” refers to the production process used by ENSA members to produce food using whole soybeans. Soy food products from ENSA members are produced without any use of GM (genetically modified) material or GM beans.

ENSA is an association of internationally operating companies, ranging from large corporations to small, family-owned businesses with an annual turnover of €0.8 billion. Since its establishment in 2003, ENSA has been raising awareness about the role of soy and a plant-based diet in moving towards more sustainable food production and consumption patterns.

For more information about ENSA, please visit [www.enssa-eu.org](http://www.enssa-eu.org) or contact the Secretariat.

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