

Denominations of plant-based food and drink products: European Parliament sends mixed message ahead of trilogue negotiations on CAP Reform

23 October 2020

The European Plant-based Foods Association (ENSA) is puzzled by the outcome of today's vote on the Common Market Organisation (CMO) Regulation, within the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). On the one hand, MEPs massively rejected the introduction of restrictions on the use of meat-related terms on plant-based food products, recognising that consumers are not confused by the use of such terms and that these products have a role to play in the transition towards more sustainable diets. On the other hand, MEPs supported an amendment which, if adopted in the final text, would introduce far-reaching restrictions on the use of dairy terms on plant-based products.

Dairy denominations are already protected in EU legislation, prohibiting the use of sales denominations such as 'oat milk'. ENSA members have never referred to their products as "milk", "yoghurt" or "dairy" without further qualification, because their products are not made using cow's milk. On the contrary, plant-based food manufacturer offer an alternative to animal-based milk products and clearly indicate this to the consumer by describing their products as "dairy alternatives", "milk alternatives" and "plant-based alternatives to yoghurt". If adopted in the final text, amendment 171 would go way beyond that by prohibiting any indirect reference to dairy terms in all commercial communications, meaning that terms such as 'creamy' or 'plant-based alternatives to yoghurt' could become illegal.

These provisions would hinder consumers' access to plant-based foods by making it more difficult for them to identify these products. This is both unnecessary to protect consumers (BEUC's position) and going against the scientific recommendations to switch to more sustainable diets including more plant-based foods.

Sue Garfitt, President of ENSA said: *"The current rules are very clear: they protect consumers from misleading practices while providing an equal level playing field for fair competition between products which are alternatives. We are glad that the Parliament recognized this for plant-based alternatives to meat and we hope the inter-institutional negotiations will reach a similar conclusion as far as dairy alternatives are concerned"*.

As inter-institutional negotiations will begin, we call on the Council to support clear information to consumers on plant-based foods and to reject the amendment 171 proposed by the Parliament. We also call on the Commission to stand by its own evaluation, which showed there was no need for further restrictions than what is already in place. We call for a detailed impact assessment of the provisions proposed by the Parliament, which we believe will have a negative impact on consumers, the environment and the European plant-based foods sector, in breach of the principle of proportionality enshrined in the Treaty on European Union.

About ENSA

The European Plant-based Foods Association (ENSA) represents the interests of plant-based food manufacturers in Europe. ENSA is an association of internationally operating companies, ranging from large corporations to small, family-owned businesses with a combined annual turnover of over €1 billion. ENSA



members produce high-quality plant-based alternatives to dairy and meat products. Since its establishment in 2003, ENSA has been raising awareness about the role of plant-based diet in moving towards more sustainable and healthier food consumption patterns.