

EU policy support for plant-based foods essential if Europe wants sustainable food production and consumption

Brussels, 4 December 2013 – European institutions must invest more in resource-efficient and healthy crops such as soy and other plant-based foods if they are to deliver on their commitment to move to more sustainable production and consumption. This was the conclusion of a panel discussion held today, hosted by the European Natural Soyfoods Manufacturers Association (ENSA) and MEP Bart Staes (Belgium, the Greens) to mark ENSA’s 10th anniversary and the launch of its reference guide “Growing appetite for a healthy and sustainable diet: Soyfood production and consumption in Europe”.

The reference guide, launched during the panel debate “10 years of driving sustainable food consumption and production - what’s next?” was created to highlight the latest trends in food supply and demand as well as the important role of plant-based foods in reducing the environmental footprint of agricultural production and providing healthy and wholesome products to European consumers.

With the Communication on Sustainability in the Food System expected from the European Commission in early 2014, the question of how the EU can make its food production more sustainable while at the same time maintaining the optimum level of nutrition in our diets has never been more relevant. During the ENSA debate, panellists agreed that the scarcity of natural resources combined with the increasing global demand for agricultural products show a clear need to switch to more resource efficient crops such as soy.

“We need a harmonised legislative framework in the EU to facilitate the distribution of more resource-efficient alternatives to animal-based production as well as more policy and educational initiatives to raise consumer awareness about sustainable foods available on the market,” said Bart Staes, MEP (Belgium, the Greens) in opening the debate. He reiterated the European Parliament’s commitment to promoting an open discussion about ways to increase efficient and sustainable agricultural production in Europe.

Bernard Deryckere, President of ENSA, highlighted the importance of plant-based foods for resource efficient Europe: *“The modern agricultural sector is still characterised by unsustainable production methods which emit a significant amount of greenhouse gases and this needs to change. For example, using three times less land, 2.5 times less water and emitting 5 times less GHG compared to dairy milk, soy drinks represent a viable solution for a resource-efficient Europe. But despite the advantages of soy and plant-based foods being well-known, these products still remain a niche sector in many EU member states due to the lack of policy support”.*

Representatives of the retail sector confirmed that despite a gradually increasing interest from European consumers to more sustainable food products, there is still a need to



educate larger audiences about the environmental impact of their food consumption and about how they can adopt a more resource-efficient and sustainable diet without compromising their nutritional needs.

The reference guide *“Growing appetite for a healthy and sustainable diet: Soyfood production and consumption in Europe”* can be downloaded on the ENSA website: www.ensa-eu.org. The document is based on studies and data provided by OECD, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), Eurostat and other independent sources and provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges and opportunities the agri-food sector is facing today.

For more information please contact ENSA Secretariat on + 32 2 741 62 15 or secretariat@ensa-eu.org

About ENSA

Established in January 2003, the ENSA represents the interests of Natural Soyfoods 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.

The ENSA is an association of internationally operating companies, ranging from large corporations to small, family-owned businesses. ENSA gathers 11 members, which employ some 1500 people and realize a combined turnover of close to €500 million. Since its establishment in 2003, ENSA has been raising awareness for the role of soy and a plant-based diet in moving to more sustainable food production and consumption patterns.

For more information about ENSA, please visit www.ensa-eu.org or contact the ENSA Secretariat.

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