

Roadmap to boost the European agro-food industry

The EU's food industry is not excluded from today's economic downturn. To give this important industry sector fresh impetus, European Commission Vice President Günter Verheugen and Commissioners Mariann Fischer Boel and Meglena Kuneva, today discussed with stakeholders the follow up to the recommendations of the High level Group, which were issued on 17th March 2009.

Vice President Verheugen and Commissioners Fischer Boel and Kuneva said: " We call upon industry and national authorities to help implement recommendations which should lead to a more competitive agro food sector for the benefit of consumers, farmers and the industry recommendations which should help promote high quality food for European citizens."

Today's stakeholder meeting agreed on a **Roadmap of Key Initiatives** that engages the European Commission, the participating Member States and the stakeholders to implement in the near future coordinated actions, such as:

- improvement of the transparency of the fixing of **prices and contractual arrangements** along the food supply chain;
- establishing a **market surveillance mechanism of counterfeiting**;
- a **SWOT analysis** (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) to assess the position of the European agro-food industry in the global market.
- **simplification of the administrative procedures**, particularly for SMEs, for participation in research funding programmes;
- setting up a **social dialogue** in the agro-food industry;
- developing **educational programmes** which raise awareness of the importance of the agro-food industry;
- setting up a **European Forum to discuss the improvement of commercial relations among the players of the food chain**, with the aim to adopt an EU wide code of conduct;
- launching a study on the **effects of retailers' own brands** on the competitiveness of the agro-food industry, in particular on Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs);
- **promotion of the instruments available for SMEs**, e.g. Enterprise Europe Network;

Background

The High Level Group on the Competitiveness of the Agro-Food Industry Group brought together Member States as well as senior policy makers from the agro-food industry, civil society and professional associations. Their task was to identify and address issues that determine the competitiveness of the European agro-food industry and to formulate a set of recommendations to achieve predictable and stable framework conditions for the years to come.

The food and drink industry is one of Europe's most important and dynamic industrial sectors. It is made up of about 280 000 companies, over 90% of which are SMEs, and provides jobs for 4 million people. The European food industry is our number one industry in terms of turnover (around 800 €billion).

[The Recommendations, the Report and the Roadmap of Key Initiatives](#)