

Brussels, 14 October 2020

Open letter on Front of Pack Nutrition Labelling by

Paolo De Castro (Italy, S&D)

Carmen Avram (Romania, S&D)

Attila Ara-Kovács (Hungary, S&D)

Lefteris Christoforou (Cyprus, EPP)

Martin Hlaváček (Czech Republic, RENEW)

Petros Kokkalis (Greece, GUE)

Uncoordinated action toward the objectives of food safety, transparency and consumer protection has resulted in the proliferation of front-of-pack labelling schemes, which risk jeopardizing EU citizens' health and wiping out thousands of producers.

Would you allow business giants to decide on your eating-habits, putting your health into their hands? A new Trojan horse called 'Nutri-Score' is at our doorstep. And it should not come as a surprise if some of the biggest food multinationals and retailers are all in favour of a mandatory European Nutri-Score system which, through different colours and over-simplistic grades, wants to dictate what is good and what is not for you to eat.

If it is true that through the Farm to Fork Strategy Europe wants to empower consumers to make informed, healthy and sustainable choices for a varied and balanced diet, someone should explain European citizens how it is possible that honey, orange juice, extra-virgin olive oil or Comté cheese would be spotted as 'red', namely dangerous for human health, whereas French fries, light cola, frozen bolognaise pizza, chips or famous energy drinks would be labelled as 'green' and good.

There is something clearly wrong here, but also extremely dangerous. Indeed, front-of-pack nutrition labelling schemes should help consumers make more informed and correct choices, curbing diet-related diseases. But this is not the objective of Nutri-Score that, on the contrary, can mislead citizens and influence their choices with an overall evaluation, which does not provide any sort of exhaustive and nutrient-specific information based on the reference intakes of the average consumer. To make things worse, it could turn out to be a powerful tool in the hands of a few companies, which will be able to hijack eating habits and, in so doing, control huge commercial flows.

Europe cannot fall victim of a few companies' appetites. We say a big NO to a system manoeuvred behind citizens' back that does not protect their health and that not only puts in danger our centuries-old culinary tradition but also contradicts all the efforts made so far in order to protect and be proud of our EU Geographical Indications.

Thus, we are ready to stand side by side with our farmers, small and quality producers who have all raised deep concerns over a front of pack nutritional labelling that ends up with arbitrarily discriminating healthy products, that often stem from the unique European cultural and gastronomic heritage.

We call on the Commission to come up with a harmonized, non-discriminatory and evidence-based labelling, which prioritizes consumers' empowerment over profit, by correctly informing citizens about what they buy and bring every day to the table.