



25th September 2015

MEDIA BRIEFING

SPECIAL EVENT - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EU NGOs AND MEPs DISH UP FREE AND SUSTAINABLE FARE

29th September 2015

12:00 -14:30

European Parliament Esplanade, Brussels

Yes, there is such a thing as a free lunch – and on 29th September 2015 a coalition of NGOs and MEPs are offering just that.

The Free Lunch is a culinary, cultural and political public event co-organised by Humane Society International, Compassion in World Farming, Food for Life Global, Beyond GM and the European Parliament's Sustainable Food Systems Group.

The organisers will serve up to 1000 free lunches to Members of the European Parliament, Parliamentary staff and visitors, European Commission officials and members of the public. Additional food prepared during the event will be donated to the refugees camped at the Maximilian Park in Brussels.

Food for thought

This lunch – which will be made from surplus or aesthetically imperfect vegetables – is free of artificial additives and GMOs, does not contain animal products and will free up waste by using food that would otherwise be thrown away.

The event will highlight that fact that current EU food system - indeed the global food system - produces unacceptable quantities of food waste and that our consumption habits, in particular our overconsumption of animal-derived foods, causes huge quantities of resource loss and environmental damage, encourages large GMO monocultures of maize and soya, not to mention causing untold and unnecessary suffering for animals and an increase in the risk of food-related non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease, in humans.

The need for change

The lunch will serve as an example of the food that is endorsed by the organisers: ecological, ethical, healthy, safe, affordable and tasty. The organisers will distribute informational materials on healthy and sustainable food and be joined by a range of expert speakers.

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The event will also highlight a number of political asks, including calls for the European Commission to:

- produce a holistic strategy towards a sustainable European food and farming system, after the disappointing withdrawal of the Communication on Building a Sustainable European Food System.
- develop guidelines on what constitutes a healthy and sustainable diet, including the need to reduce consumption of animal-derived foods for health, environmental and animal welfare. To be encouraged for adoption at Member State level.
- include reduction of animal-derived foods in the revised Green Public Procurement guidelines.
- introduce an EU target on the reduction of animal-derived foods by 30 percent by 2030.
- introduce an EU target that, by 2030, 100 percent of children should have received food and nutrition education, including on the benefits of plant-based eating, by the time they have completed primary school.
- develop promotional measures for increased consumption of plant-based foods.

MORE INFORMATION

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1472774996361943/>

Fact sheets: A series of downloadable fact sheets covering Animal Welfare, GMOs, Food Waste and Health are available online at www.beyond-gm.org/good-food

Contacts:

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QUOTES FROM THE ORGANISERS

“Both EU policymakers and citizens need to start facing up to the rather inconvenient truth that our current levels of meat consumption are completely unsustainable. For the sake of animal welfare, the environment and our own health and well-being, it is essential that we do not delay in taking

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steps to moderate our consumption of animal products. *The Free Lunch* is not only an opportunity to promote the pleasures of plant-based foods, but to also to urge the European Commission to develop a meaningful strategy towards achieving a sustainable food and farming system in the EU.”

– **Dr Joanna Swabe, Executive Director, Humane Society International/Europe**

“At an age of unprecedented progress we produce more than enough to feed the world. We ought to seize this opportunity and make responsible choices. Healthy, ethical and sustainable diets are a must. *The Free Lunch* event, taking place on the door step of Europe’s representatives, aims to showcase how the choices we make will benefit people, animals and the planet. The message to the EU institutions is that plant-based foods are part of a sustainable future and we should seize every opportunity to promote them through the personal choices we make in addition to legislative measures.”

– **Olga Kikou, European Affairs Manager, Compassion in World Farming**

“In a world that is overly abundant with fruits, vegetables and grains, there is absolutely no reason for hunger to exist, other than greed. The resources of the world are not be equally shared and so Food for Life Global's sole mission is to create a sense of unity and equality in the world so that no one goes hungry. We do this in practice and precept. The people of the developed countries are becoming more aware of the link between animal agribusiness and climate change, the next step in this evolution is seeing the link between animal agribusiness and world hunger. The current model of feeding over 50% of world grains to animals for food is inefficient and unsustainable.”

– **Paul Rodney Turner, Executive Director, Food for Life Global**

“It is so inspiring to work alongside other committed NGOs and MEPs to highlight the terrible waste that runs through the industrial food system. This waste extends beyond just what we throw away – though that’s bad enough. It reaches into areas such as wasted energy, wasted soil, wasted water and the wasted lives of animals. Human lives are wasted too, due to avoidable non-communicable diseases caused by a food system that favours high-fat, high-sugar, low-nutrient processed food products over fresh foods. GMOs, of course, are a form of waste too, since they waste valuable resources which could be directed into productive, sustainable farming. Joined-up thinking in the EU, directed at sustainable food production, could help us end this unacceptable cycle of waste.”

– **Pat Thomas, Director, Beyond GM**

"After the Commission-Barroso, also under Juncker high-level decision makers at the European Commission are blocking its very own action plan to address food waste and to promote a sustainable food policy for Europe. Four years of research and human capital has been spent on this communication and the Commission is just throwing it away because of fear for... fear for what? A(nother) crises in the EU? Eurosceptics? Afraid of telling people what to eat? More and more citizens are already bottom-up working on food waste and a different, more sustainable food and agriculture system. But politics isn't following. After the recent outrage of European farmers and after all the scientific evidence on the negative ecological impacts of the current agro-industrial model, it is clear this system is crashing. The European Commission needs to wake up and shift from a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) to a Sustainable Food Policy (SFP). It would be wise for all European policy makers to take these cries for change into account, instead of favouring big agro-industrial companies."

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– **Bart Staes, Member of the European parliament for the Greens and Co-Chair of the Sustainable Food Systems Group**

"If the question is wrong, you can't get the answer right. Sustainable food includes several aspects that need to be solved simultaneously, not separately. Sustainable food is at the same time ecological, ethical, healthy, safe, affordable and tasty. Instead of treating in silos EU agriculture, environment, food safety and food information policies, we need holistic EU food policy that takes into account all these aspects at the same time. *The Free Lunch* event gives us an important reminder of the fact that with holistic food policy that designs food production to meet the needs of the consumers there would be no such thing as food waste."

– **Sirpa Pietikäinen, Member of the European Parliament for the European People's Party and Co-Chair of the Sustainable Food Systems Group**

SUPPORTING QUOTE FROM PAUL McCARTNEY & FAMILY

"We are supporting The Free Lunch because it is essential that politicians adopt measures which promote healthy and sustainable food consumption: more plant-based foods and fewer animal-based foods."

– **Paul, Mary and Stella McCartney**