

Land- en Tuinbouworganisatie Nederland

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Mrs Stella Kyriakides
Commissioner for Health and Food Safety
European Commission
Rue de la Loi 200
B1049 Brussels
Belgium

The Hague, 03-04-2020

Dear Mrs Kyriakides,

On behalf of the Dutch Organisation for Agriculture and Horticulture, LTO Nederland, I am hereby addressing you concerning the Farm to Fork strategy, of which the communication reportedly will be published April 29th. In our opinion, the publication and associated discussions, should be postponed.

The Covid-19 pandemic is leaving its mark on everything and everyone in- and outside the European Union. The agricultural sector is being hit hard, too. Farmers currently are confronted with challenges never seen before and are facing an increasingly difficult situation. The pandemic and the crisis it's causing increases uncertainty for farmers day by day. There is a considerable drop in demand for quite some products and there is no concrete prospect of improvement in the near future. For many agricultural entrepreneurs, 2020 is likely to be a lost year in the industry. Unfortunately we believe that for some, it will be the year they go out of business due to this crisis. Therefore, we would like to draw your attention to the publication of the Farm to Fork strategy and ask for postponement. An exceptional year calls for an exceptional measure, for which we ask your support.

As Dutch farmers and growers we believe the European Green Deal, specifically the Farm to Fork strategy, comes with opportunities and challenges. We believe the socio-economic position of agricultural entrepreneurs must be strengthened and we hope that the Farm to Fork strategy will contribute to that goal. Hopefully the strategies of the Commission will also lead to greater appreciation for food and plant production.

Nevertheless, we also see some risks. The information we currently have on the Farm to Fork strategy shows that extra efforts are required from agricultural entrepreneurs when new measures are implemented. In this confusing and challenging time, we do not believe this is what helps farmers and growers most. What is needed now, next to adequate support measures, is certainty and stability.

Although it seems the Farm to Fork strategy may strengthen and support the many ambitions of Dutch farmers and growers, now does not seem to be the right time to publish and discuss this new initiative. Sustainable food production needs to be ensured first, by creating financial stability for farmers and growers, making sure they can sell, trade and transport their products. Consequently, this is not the time to impose additional rules creating even more financial instability which poses great risks for the health and wellbeing of citizens all over Europe.

In these days of crisis, we all feel that food security needs to be on top of the agenda again. We see in citizens hoarding food in supermarkets and in societies all over the world fearing for food crises as a result of the pandemic. Our primary focus at this time is safeguarding the stability of the food chain and doing everything we can to get business through this crisis. We hope you take our plea into consideration and choose to further consult farmers and farmers organisations when the time is right.

Yours sincerely,

Marc Calon

President LTO Nederland