



European  
Ombudsman

## REPORT ON MEETING

# REPORT ON THE MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN OMBUDSMAN INQUIRY TEAM WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

**COMPLAINT:** 2129/2025/MIK

**Case title:** The failure by the European Commission to inform the public about the status of its envisaged legislative proposal on sustainable food systems as foreseen under the EU 'Farm to Fork' Strategy

**Date:** Tuesday, 17 March 2026

## Meeting at the European Ombudsman's office

### Present

#### European Commission

*Directorate-General Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE)*

Director, Food Safety, Sustainability, and Innovation

Head of Unit, General Food Law, Food Waste and Food Information to Consumers

Deputy Head of Unit, General Food Law, Food Waste and Food Information to Consumers

Team Leader - Food information & Agri-food issues, General Food Law, Food Waste and Food Information to Consumers

Trainee - Food information & Agri-food issues, General Food Law, Food Waste and Food Information to Consumers

Policy Assistant, Inter-Institutional Relations

#### *Secretariat-General*

Policy Coordinator, Clean Transition & One Health

Head of Unit, Working methods & Decision-making Process

IT Project Manager, Digital Solutions

Coordinator for Relations with the European Ombudsman, Transparency & Ethics

#### *Directorate-General Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI)*

Head of Unit, Policy perspectives

#### *Directorate-General Environment (DG ENV)*

Adviser for Biodiversity

#### *Directorate-General Maritime Affairs and Fisheries (DG MARE)*

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Policy Officer - Aquaculture & sustainable food systems. Blue Economy Sectors, Aquaculture and Maritime Spatial Planning

**European Ombudsman:**

- Rosita HICKEY, Director of Inquiries
- Michał KRAJEWSKI, Inquiries Officer
- Amandine LE BELLEC, Inquiries Officer
- José Luis da MOTA FLORES, Inquiries Trainee

**Purpose of the meeting**

The Ombudsman opened an inquiry into a complaint that the European Commission failed to inform the public about the status of its envisaged legislative initiative on sustainable food systems as foreseen under the EU 'Farm to Fork' Strategy. The purpose of the meeting was for the Ombudsman inquiry team to gather information and clarifications regarding the status of the abovementioned legislative proposal, as well as how the Commission informs the public when it suspends or discontinues its work on specific legislative initiatives, which have been previously announced, including in relation to which the Commission has already conducted public consultations.

**Introduction and procedural information**

The Ombudsman inquiry team introduced themselves, thanked the Commission representatives for meeting with them and set out the purpose of the meeting. They outlined the legal framework that applies to meetings held by the Ombudsman, in particular, that the Ombudsman would not disclose any information identified by the Commission as confidential, neither to the complainant nor to any other person outside the Ombudsman's Office, without the Commission's prior consent.<sup>1</sup>

The inquiry team explained that they would draw up a draft report on the meeting to be sent to the Commission to ensure that the contents were factually accurate and complete. The meeting report would then be finalised, included in the file and provided to the complainant. No confidential information would be included in the report or otherwise provided to the complainant or any third party.

**Information exchanged**

*Background information*

The Commission representatives recalled that the Framework for Sustainable Food Systems (FSFS) had been announced, in the context of the Farm to Fork Strategy, as a joint initiative by four Directorates-General (DG SANTE, DG AGRI, DG MARE, DG ENV) during the 2019–2024 Commission mandate. The FSFS aimed to integrate and ensure policy coherence across the EU food system, strengthen its resilience, fairness, and sustainability. The FSFS was planned to be adopted in 2023. Between 2020 and 2023, the Commission undertook preparatory steps to ensure an evidence-based policy

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<sup>1</sup> Article 4.8 of the European Ombudsman's Implementing Provisions.



development. This work included an Inception Impact Assessment<sup>2</sup> and the holding of a public consultation<sup>3</sup> as well as updates by DG SANTE in the regular meetings of DG SANTE's Advisory Group on the Sustainability of Food Systems.

However, Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine caused disruptions of supply chains, a significant increase in the prices of food and fertilisers, disturbing the agricultural markets and leading to new social and economic challenges. These developments affected the Commission's above initiative.

### *The status of the legislative initiative on sustainable food systems as foreseen under the EU 'Farm to Fork' Strategy*

The Commission representatives stated that, in the course of 2023, the disruption caused by Russia's war of aggression together with the farmers' protests and the broader stakeholder concerns prompted the Commission to reassess its political priorities. Consequently, it became apparent that there was a need to rethink the approach under the Farm to Fork Strategy.

The change of direction was made public in the Commission President's 2023 State of the Union address to the European Parliament in which, among others, she announced a Strategic Dialogue on the Future of Agriculture and Food. The Strategic Dialogue was launched in January 2024,<sup>4</sup> bringing together major stakeholders and culminating in the report entitled "A shared prospect for farming and food in Europe".<sup>5</sup> Building on this report, the Commission presented a 'Vision for Agriculture and Food' in February 2025.<sup>6</sup>

The Commission representatives noted that neither the report nor the Vision mentioned the FSFS or the Farm to Fork Strategy. As such, the Commission considered that it had been clear to stakeholders that a change of direction had occurred and that both the FSFS and the Farm to Fork Strategy had been discontinued as a result. The representatives added that the Commission did not receive further comments or questions from stakeholders regarding the matter. The Commission representatives confirmed that work on the FSFS had discontinued.

### *How the Commission informs the public about suspending or withdrawing its work on specific legislative initiatives*

The Commission representatives clarified the terminology regarding the status of legislative proposals. They stated that the term 'withdrawal' is applied to legislative proposals adopted by the Commission and submitted to the European Parliament and the Council in view of their adoption by the co-legislators. Withdrawn proposals are announced in bulk withdrawals, while ad hoc withdrawals are published in the Official

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<sup>2</sup> Available at: [https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/efad46c1-0813-443f-8670-83e278206084\\_en?filename=f2f\\_legis\\_ia\\_fsfs\\_5902055.pdf](https://food.ec.europa.eu/document/download/efad46c1-0813-443f-8670-83e278206084_en?filename=f2f_legis_ia_fsfs_5902055.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13174-Sustainable-food-system-setting-up-an-EU-framework/public-consultation\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives/13174-Sustainable-food-system-setting-up-an-EU-framework/public-consultation_en).

<sup>4</sup> Available at: [https://commission.europa.eu/topics/agriculture-and-rural-development/strategic-dialogue-future-eu-agriculture\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/topics/agriculture-and-rural-development/strategic-dialogue-future-eu-agriculture_en).

<sup>5</sup> Available at: [https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/committees-and-expert-groups/strategic-dialogue-future-eu-agriculture\\_en](https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/common-agricultural-policy/cap-overview/committees-and-expert-groups/strategic-dialogue-future-eu-agriculture_en).

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX:52025DC0075>.



Journal of the European Union. The term 'abandoned' is used for policy initiatives that have not yet resulted in the adoption of legislative proposals by the Commission.

The Commission representatives indicated that the status of policy initiatives can be consulted on the Commission's 'Have your Say' webpage.<sup>7</sup> The information available on this page is automatically fed by the Commission's internal systems to reflect the real-time status of initiatives. However, as a result of this complaint, the Commission examined the information currently available on the page and found some inaccuracies and out-of-date information for a number of policy initiatives. It has already undertaken steps to introduce updates and implement systemic improvements to ensure that stakeholders obtain clear information about the current status of specific initiatives, including those that the Commission decided to discontinue (that is, 'abandon', in the Commission's internal terminology).

### **Conclusion of the meeting**

The inquiry team thanked the Commission representatives for their time and for the explanations provided, and the meeting ended.

Brussels, 20 March 2026

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Michał Krajewski  
Inquiries Officer

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<sup>7</sup> Available at: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/have-your-say/initiatives_en).