

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY
SEUL LE TEXTE PRONONCÉ FAIT FOI
ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT

Attilio Zanetti, Zanetti spa,

EDA Vice President

Speaking Points

« 15 Years EU Food Law »

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Bibliothèque Solvay,

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Dear Commissioner Andriukaitis,

dear Director General Url,

dear MEP

list to be completed

dear friends of the food law and friends of good food,

what an honour for me to be invited to speak at the prestigious bibliothèque Solvay
to an even more prestigious audience –tante grazie per l’invito!

ευχαριστώ για την πρόσκληση, efcharistó gia tin prósklisi

Dear Commissioner, your services asked me to share my perspective on

„EU food safety rules as a basis for competitiveness in the internal market and in
international trade“.

Just to start introducing myself: I am a fourth generation cheese maker and cheese
trader from northern Italy.

Our family has been making and trading Italian PDO quality cheeses like Grana
Padano and Parmigiano Reggiano for over 117 years and now selling this all over the
Union and all over the world.

For me as an entrepreneur, 15 years of EU Food Law translate first of all into 15 years of steady improvement and growth.

Since 2002, our Company increased cheese sales by 112% and the export sales by over 160%; 15 years ago, our premium cheeses were available to consumers in 48 Countries, today, we are proud to serve cheese aficionados in 88 Countries across the world including all Member States of our Union.

It is the EU Food Law that makes the whole Union with its 28 Member States and its 500 mio citizens **a true home market to my cheeses.**

It is the EU Food Law that allows citizens all over Europe to have **trust and confidence** that the food they eat, and serve their children, is safe.

It is the EU Food Law that ensures that **trading partners across the globe** have **confidence** in our products, and we can build on that basis of confidence, with our quality and our brands.

Let me put it this way: the promotion logo of your colleagues in DG AGRI

„Enjoy, it's from Europe“ shows the incredible success of our EU Food Law:

food safety is not a catchy sales argument for European food any longer, all over the world people take this for granted.

Yes, the EU Food Law, or Regulation 178/2002 as lawyers tend to call it, is a real success story.

A success story for me, a cheese maker from the northern Italian countryside

a success story for the whole food industry,

a success story for all citizens and consumers in Europe and

a huge success story for the Single Market and the Union.

EU Commissioner David Byrne was right, when he said, the day the EU Food Law was adopted by the Council back in 2002: „**Today is a day of great achievement**“.

What strikes me is that at the beginning of this millennium it was the European Commission, at the time led by my fellow countryman Romano Prodi, that presented a “White Paper” in January 2000 giving a major and radical new approach on very sensitive topics and only 24 months later had managed to publish the EU Food Law in the Official Journal.

24 months is the same maturation time of a premium Grana Padano.

The EU Food Law was born out of a crisis situation and is now an adolescent.

So far, five amendments have been decided, none of these amendments has changed the original basic ideas:

- **free movement of safe and wholesome food,**
- **high level of consumer protection,**
- **responsibility of the food business operator,**
- **traceability within the chain,**
- **set up of a rapid alert system and, of course,**
- **an independent scientific risk assessment by EFSA, based in Parma.**

As EDA we are proud to be a voice of the European dairy sector in the new EFSA consultative body – **the EFSA Stakeholder Forum**. We appreciate EFSA’s openness towards the stakeholders and we believe that **a closer scientific dialogue and interaction between EFSA and the industry** are crucial to improve the EFSA’s scientific advice. **EDA remains a strong supporter of EFSA** because we believe that a **solid and evidence-based EU food law** should be based on the best scientific advice.

There is a broad public discussion on EFSA and its scientific independence today.

That's why I would like to underline that when it comes to milk and dairy, to food production in general, we are talking about a true SME sector, where the high level scientific expertise is mostly based in universities and other public bodies and not within the industry.

And from our own experience, dear Mr Url, we **trust in EFSA and its independence** which must be protected and respected by all stakeholders, including the political hemisphere.

For us, the respect of the EFSA leadership position for all food safety questions at overall EU level should be fully supported by all national food safety authorities – again: the EU Food Law and the creation of EFSA is rooted in the Single Market principle.

Today, in times when the notion of ‚food policy‘ becomes quite popular, do we need to re-direct the EU Food Law ?

Are there other objectives than food safety that should complement the General Food Law? We've heard quite some ideas in the first panel this morning.

I think we should rather **refocus on the essence of the General Food Law**.

„The free movement of safe and wholesome food is an essential aspect of the internal market and contributes significantly to the health and the well-being of citizens and to their social and economic interests“, as Whereas 1 of the General Food Law puts it.

Today, in a time where we should also celebrate the 25th anniversary of the completion of our EU Single Market, this Single Market is no longer functioning the way it should for cheese and for food in general.

Origin labelling

The EU dairy sector has always been firmly supporting the European legislation on **voluntary origin labelling**.

We deeply regret that in the absence of an harmonised EU voluntary rule, our industry is now faced with **numerous national mandatory origin labelling laws** forcing especially dairies in so-called border regions to revise their milk collection strategy.

We have **one EU milk quality** and this is regulated by the harmonised EU food law - these national laws have therefore no legal or technological justification and we know that they are powered by purely political motivations.

As businesses, we have counted on the EU Commission to react firmly and oppose to these national proposals.

Unfortunately, our concerns have not been heard. What we can see now is a wave of national laws destroying the EU Single Market for milk and dairy, starting with France and the country I know best, Italy, and followed by Lithuania, Greece, Finland, Romania, Portugal and most recently Spain.

As a voice of SMEs today, and as a cheesemaker who believes in the link between quality and origin in the framework of our geographical indications, like our Grana Padano or Camembert de Normandie, or others

I do urge the Commission to use its powers to stop this spread of nationalism and defend the EU Single Market for milk and dairy.

Nutrition labelling is another field where various initiatives have been undertaken at national level, the best example, better the worst one (!), being the **Traffic-Lights style** labelling promoted by the UK.

We have been following with most interest the **infringement procedure** launched by the EU Commission for very good reasons against the UK labelling initiative.

It would be most appreciated if the Commission could inform the stakeholders at which stage this process stands now.

As a cheese producer and dairy man, I see no logic or consumer benefit in a labelling scheme where a diet soda drink ranks better than drinking milk.

Dairy and cheese are fundamental foods for the European population, being great contributors of high quality protein and many vitamins and minerals such as calcium. Europe and Member States should continue to encourage the consumption of milk and dairy as part of a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle.

We cannot support any initiatives such as traffic lights labels that are only **discouraging consumers from wholesome and nutritious foods**.

The consumption of milk and dairy is declining in Europe because we do not correctly educate the consumers about the nutrient richness of milk and dairy products. We can already observe calcium deficiencies in many population groups such as children and teenagers and we should be aware that this might have serious consequences for the public health of our future generations.

As a fourth generation cheese maker, let me shortly touch on another point: cheese is a traditional food and it is a natural food – all you need is milk, rennet and salt.

Several thousand years before the European Union was founded, mankind made cheese to preserve one of nature's most precious food: milk.

Yes, cheese and many dairy products are **nutrient rich**,

And yes, cheese has a **certain fat and salt content**.

And yes, we are proud of offering a natural product, not a highly processed, 'improved' or "reformulated" product as they call it today, where the fat, salt or sugar content are technologically adjusted according to the latest hype of any food group.

Dear Commissioner,

ladies and gentlemen,

the General Food Law was born with the clear objective to harmonize the different food law concepts in the Member States that risked to build up barriers to the free movement of food in the Single Market.

When wishing happy birthday to the EU Food Law today, my wish to all of you is to continue the success story of the EU Food Law and, the success story of EFSA and to keep the Single Market spirit alive in all food law dossiers.

Viva Europa et

Vive l'Europe

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