

## Roadmap on the “Farm to Fork Strategy”

The European Federation of Foie Gras – Euro Foie Gras – welcomes the willingness of the European Commission to address the issue of food sustainability in a holistic way by “designing a fair, healthy and environmentally-friendly food system” under the Green Deal.

All the actors of the Federation, which brings together the different stages of the food chain in the five European producing countries<sup>1</sup>, are committed to food quality, animal health and welfare, environmental sustainability and good information to consumers while ensuring a decent revenue to the breeders and contributing to the life of rural areas.

Euro Foie Gras looks forward to working with the European Commission on the Strategy as well as on the various texts that will stem from it.

### Economic sustainability & life in rural areas

***Euro Foie Gras fully supports the objective of economic sustainability. The Federation underlines the importance of maintaining and further supporting employment in rural areas and of ensuring a decent revenue to European farmers.***

The majority of foie gras farms in Europe are **family** and they rely on a traditional know-how. The five European producing countries produce 90% of the foie gras worldwide and the production is closely linked to the identity of several territories. The sector contributes to the **economic and social life in rural areas**. It generates **more than 50.000 direct jobs** and it is also the source of **around 150.000 indirect jobs**: food suppliers, hatcheries, slaughterhouses traders, etc. In some areas like in the South-West of France, which is the largest foie gras producing region in the world, this is an essential complementary activity for breeders who are also often corn producers. This corn is used to feed their animals.

Furthermore, one of the specificities of the sector that must be preserved is the **contract agreement system** (“contractualisation”). This means that breeders and processors define either directly or through a producers’ organisation and on a pluriannual basis, a volume and a price. This system is valuable to breeders who have more guarantees and who can therefore better plan the conduct of their business.

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<sup>1</sup> The European foie gras producing countries are: Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Hungary and Spain.

***Euro Foie Gras thinks that providing healthy and high-quality food to European citizens must be among the top priorities of the “Farm to Fork” Strategy. The Federation calls on the European institutions to keep supporting and further valuing European high-quality products.***

Foie gras breeders are committed to provide high-quality products to consumers. They are proud to produce a delicacy contributing to the **European culinary outreach** in the world. This quality combined with the traditional dimension of the production explain why in Hungary, goose liver has obtained the distinction “**Hungaricum**”: a unique product to which Hungarians attach great importance. Likewise, in France, foie gras is officially recognized as being part of the **Protected Cultural and Gastronomic Heritage** (art. 654-27-1 of the Rural Code) and South-West foie gras has been benefiting from a **Protected Geographical Indication since June 2000 (IGP canard à foie gras du Sud Ouest)**.

Furthermore, the foie gras sector contributes to **less food waste** since everything in the fat ducks and geese is used to make numerous products such as duck breast also called “magret”, confit, rillettes, etc. Even feathers are used to produce bedding or clothing of high quality.

Regarding nutrition, it is worth mentioning that fat from fat palmipeds has high levels of monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fatty acids, as does olive oil, that have health benefits when they replace saturated fats.

## Animal welfare

***Euro Foie Gras has been committed to improve breeding practices by using the most up-to-date scientific data. Being a proactive sector, the Federation is determined to contribute to any future discussion on animal welfare improvement.***

With 90% of the life of fat palmipeds (ducks and geese) spent outdoors and a long production cycle (between 90 and 95 days), **the production of foie gras is extensive and mostly open-air**. This exceptional breeding method responds to strong consumer demand for quality poultry and presents several environmental advantages such as a low energy consumption and the possibility of developing agroforestry, thus contributing to the **environmental sustainability of the sector**.

On the issue of collective housing, used between 9 and 12 days for ducks and 12 to 15 days for geese on average during the fattening phase, Euro Foie Gras insists on the importance of avoiding any dogmatic decisions. In general terms, decisions on housing systems should be based on **scientific evidence** and should seek to find a balance between different requirements: animal welfare, animal health, sanitary imperatives and the ergonomics of the farmer's work while maintaining excellence in production.

In addition to the EU Directive 98/58 on the protection of animals kept for farming purposes, foie gras breeders are subject to requirements or initiatives that go beyond European standards. In **Belgium, the Royal Decree** of 1994, modified in 2010<sup>2</sup> and controlled by the public authorities, enacts specific obligations relating to the housing system of fat palmipeds in terms of density and space. Furthermore in **France**, which represents 70% of the European

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<sup>2</sup> Royal decree of 1994 on the protection and welfare of the animals modified in 2010  
<http://environnement.wallonie.be/legis/bienetreanimal/bienetre045.html>

foie gras production, the voluntary approach “**Palmi I Trust**”<sup>3</sup> launched and led by the sector, aims to guarantee and certify the good practices of the breeders with regard to animal welfare. With a set of specifications controlled by an independent body (notably covering feed, comfort, health and hygiene of the animals), this approach is part of an ethical and professional approach through which breeders affirm their desire for transparency and continuous improvement. A similar work is being done in Spain since the sector is developing a Guide of good animal welfare practices that will be certified by an independent body.

## Animal health

***Euro Foie Gras agrees that antimicrobial resistance is a “serious health threat” that should be addressed in a holistic way and considers that animal health should continue to be a topical issue at the European level. The very rare use of antibiotics and the application of ambitious biosecurity measures are among the daily-applied commitments of the sector.***

Ensuring that their animals are in good health is a daily concern for foie gras producers. Euro Foie Gras is convinced that the extensive mode of production of fat palmipeds allows to breed more robust animals. This is the reason why, **the use of antibiotics is very rare** in this sector. Despite the risks that open-air breeding might entail (predators, virus propagation by wild animals, etc.), Euro Foie Gras is convinced that this production mode has to be maintained and supported while taking **strict biosecurity measures**. For instance, to prevent and fight against avian influenza outbreaks, the sector agreed on a **common set of rules** such as the ability of the breeders to shelter their animals, the necessity to have a waiting period for sanitary reasons (“vide sanitaire”), the possibility to put the feed and water points of the palmipeds inside or to protect them from wild birds, securing animal movements between farms, the existence of a waiting room in which a strict protocol is applied, the organisation of trainings in biosecurity measures as well as improved communication and information to farmers etc.

It should also be noted that these guidelines represent a common base shared by Euro Foie Gras members who may be subject to **stricter national rules**.

## Food information to consumers

***Euro Foie Gras supports the idea of providing better food information to consumers. Citizens’ freedom to choose the food they want to eat should be preserved and each consumer should be able to make informed choices.***

Euro Foie Gras is in favor of achieving **better policy coherence** regarding food information to consumers. **Maintaining and strengthening European marketing standards** for agricultural products under the Common Agricultural Policy are key in this regard. More precisely, the Federation calls for maintaining the definition of raw foie gras in the future delegated act on marketing standards and completing this text with the insertion of the definition of processed foie gras. This is crucial for providing **accurate information to consumers** who must be protected against fraudulent practices. Euro Foie Gras wants to assure European consumers and restaurateurs that the product they are buying is indeed foie gras and not a different and

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<sup>3</sup> The « Palmi G confiance » approach brings together 27 producers’ organisations representing almost 90% of fat palmipeds breeders out of which 70% are committed. For more information: <http://elevage-gavage.fr/le-foie-gras/les-engagements>

therefore misleading product. Only the delegated act on marketing standards can provide such assurance by defining the characteristics of both raw and processed foie gras.

*Created in 2008, Euro Foie Gras, the European Federation of Foie Gras, brings together producers' federations from France, Belgium, Bulgaria, Spain and Hungary. Its goal is to establish a continuous exchange of good practices, know-how and promote the profession of foie gras producer.*