

Food security: 4 actions for policymakers

Retail and wholesale essential in ensuring food supply for Europe's consumers

The European Commission launched today a communication on [‘Safeguarding food security and reinforcing the resilience of food systems’](#). The document analyses the impact of the Ukraine crisis in the EU and globally, with proposals to address some of the challenges of price inflation for EU farmers and consumers.

Christel Delberghe, EuroCommerce Director General commented:

“The war in Ukraine has created disruptions in the supply and cost of some commodities and exacerbated the already rising prices of energy, and other agri-food commodities and inputs. We share the Commission’s concern over the impact of rising food bills on consumers, especially the most vulnerable in our society. Our sector will be working with the food supply chain to mitigate the impact on consumers as far as possible, but we need support to deal with the significant energy costs we face and to ensure the proper functioning of the single market as the best guarantee of food security for everyone”.

During COVID, the retail and wholesale ecosystem has shown its strong commitment to ensuring food security in Europe. However, retailers and wholesalers are impacted by the current situation and are asking EU policymakers to take several actions to support them in weathering the impact of the conflict on them and the customers they serve daily:

- **provide access to the temporary framework for state aid for high energy costs:** retailers and wholesalers operate on very low margins, which makes them particularly vulnerable to spiralling energy prices and other operating costs and, as an essential sector, they are unable to slow down their activities. EuroCommerce asks the Commission and the member states to proceed as a matter of urgency with a temporary crisis framework and to include retail and wholesale as a high energy-consuming sector. The Commission and national governments should also seek to support consumers’ ability to pay their bills and mitigate inflation through cuts to VAT on sales of food and in fuel duties.
- **ensure the proper functioning of the single market:** EuroCommerce calls on member states to avoid erecting unnecessary barriers to the free flow of food, and on the Commission to ensure that the single market can do its job in ensuring food security and resilience across the EU.
- **positive communication to consumers to avoid panic-buying:** there is, no immediate threat to food security in Europe at present, as the Commission paper concludes, and governments should seek to get this message across to consumers to avoid panic-buying and unnecessary stockpiling.
- **provide flexibility and maintain the course in the sustainability transition:** some supply chains may see disruptions, but the retail and wholesale sector will be working to identify alternative suppliers where needed. This may need some relaxation of import quotas and customs formalities. Additionally, it may require flexibility around labelling requirements where ingredients may need to be changed without compromising food safety and ensuring consumers are properly informed. While some flexibility is needed to allow the food supply chain to weather this storm, a sustainable food system will remain key to the future resilience and security of our food supplies.

On top of ensuring food provisions for European consumers, the retail and wholesale sector has been active in donating food and other essentials for the people of Ukraine and the many refugees seeking safety in the EU, examples of which are listed on a dedicated EuroCommerce [webpage](#).

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 28 countries and 5 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale is the link between producers and consumers. Over a billion times a day, retailers and wholesalers distribute goods and provide an essential service to millions of business and individual customers. The sector generates 1 in 7 jobs, offering a varied career to 26 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.