

Health, environment and climate are not negotiable

More than 100 *Civil society organisations demand a stop to trade talks that will further endanger EU rules on health and the environment and aggravate the climate crisis. A change of course is needed.*



We have followed the recent talks between the European Commission and the US authorities on a new trade agreement with disbelief and disappointment. It has become clear that the Commission is prepared to accommodate Trump's demands for a reduction of EU food safety levels, to the detriment of public health, animal welfare and the environment, and also undermining EU commitments on climate change.

Fear of threats made by the US President to impose high tariffs on European cars cannot be an excuse for retreating on basic public interest. The apparent paradigm shift within the Commission, emerging after months of negotiating behind closed doors and largely shielded from public scrutiny, is highly alarming. We call on governments and parliamentarians in the

EU to push the Commission to alter its course. It must be made clear to the US Administration that our public health and environmental protection levels are not for sale.

Pressure from US trade negotiators on the EU to lower standards is nothing new. Recent statements made by US Agricultural Secretary Perdue stated that any deal would depend on concessions from the EU to allow meat rinsed with acid or chlorine, or treated with hormones, pesticide residues in food and feed, or the dismantling of protective rules on GMOs.

What is new is the response from the EU. When a comprehensive free trade agreement (TTIP) was negotiated with the US previously, the Commission claimed it would not lower standards. But recent statements by Trade Commissioner Phil Hogan about the current talks show a different approach. He has spoken of “a long list of regulatory barriers in agriculture” that could be “resolved” in an agreement.

These “regulatory barriers” are in place for good reasons: We have rules on pesticides and chemical hormones in meat to protect our health and the environment. We have restrictions on GMOs to protect biodiversity and consumers. We have restrictions on meat treated with chlorine or acid to protect animal welfare and food safety. EU citizens’ commitment to a precautionary approach was strongly confirmed during the public debate on TTIP – a trade agreement that would not have survived a democratic vote within the EU had it included concessions on the scale now demanded by the US.

We believe the Commission is putting the goals of the ‘European Green Deal’ at risk. This comprehensive strategy covers several elements now targeted by the US. For instance, according to the strategy the EU must work “to reduce significantly the use and risk of chemical pesticides”. Repeated calls from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) to support sustainable agriculture add further strength to this commitment. Yet, the Commission has not rejected US demands to lower ambitions in this area, and thus risks lending support to the most polluting kind of agriculture. Moreover, given that the conciliatory approach of the Commission is an attempt to protect the export from the EU of notoriously climate-damaging cars, the promise of the European Green Deal to bring about a greener approach to agriculture and trade now seems to be undermined by the Commission itself.

Furthermore, the Commission does not even have a mandate to conduct negotiations on these matters. The mandate adopted in April 2019 leaves no space for negotiations on food and other safety standards. Trade Commissioner Hogan has said that he is “trying to look at ways where through regulatory cooperation we might be able to look at non-tariff barriers as a way of bringing agriculture issues on the table”. This suggests that the Trade Commissioner wants to establish a long-term, discreet dialogue behind the scenes to find ways to accommodate US demands, for which he has the support of some member states. That must not be allowed to happen. It would undermine EU laws and procedures agreed to decades ago, it is not within the current mandate, and it should not be in a new one.

In light of the above, we call on European governments in the Council of the EU and parliamentarians to ensure that our concerns regarding the protection of labour rights and the environment, transparency and the involvement of civil society are honoured. Our elected representatives must call for an overhaul of the current trade talks with the US. The EU must make unequivocally clear to the US Administration that our public health and environmental protection levels are not for sale, that we will not succumb to threats, and that trade policy must put people, the environment and the climate first.

Signatories

Attac Austria	Austria
Katholische ArbeitnehmerInnen Bewegung Österreich	Austria
Allianz gerechtes Handeln	Austria
transform!at	Austria
Aufstehn.at - Verein zur Förderung zivilgesellschaftlicher Partizipation	Austria
Center for Encounter and Active Non-Violence	Austria
GLOBAL 2000 - Friends of the Earth Austria	Austria
Evangelische Kirche Hallein	Austria
Anders Handeln	Austria
ELA	Basque Country
CNE	Belgium
vzw Climaxi	Belgium
d19-20	Belgium

CNE	Belgium
Entraide et Fraternité	Belgium
MAP	Belgium
11.11.11	Belgium
European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)	Belgium
CNCD-11.11.11	Belgium
Mouvement d'Action Paysanne	Belgium
Global Aktion	Denmark
ClientEarth	Europe
Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network	Europe
Corporate Europe Observatory	Europe
Slow Food Europe	Europe
Seattle to Brussels Network	Europe
European Environmental Bureau	Europe
Friends of the Earth Europe	Europe
Banana Link	France
AAF-PSo	France
Comité Pauvreté et politique	France
Emmaüs International	France
confederation paysanne	France
réseau Roosevelt IDF	France
FRANCE NATURE ENVIRONNEMENT	France
Fédération Artisans du Monde	France
alofa tuvalu	France
Comemrce Équitable France	France
Sherpa	France
Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network France	France
Réseau Foi & Justice Afrique Europe antenne France	France
Veblen Institute	France
Attac France	France
Aitec	France
Collectif stop tafta	France
Amis de la Terre France	France

BLOOM Association	France
Committee in Solidarity with Indigenous Peoples of the Americas (CSIA-Nitassinan)	France
Youth and Environment Europe	France
Confederation paysanne 24	France - Dordogne
CONFEDERACIÓN INTERSINDICAL GALEGA (CIG)	Galizia
PowerShift e.V.	Germany
Campact	Germany
BUND KG Bonn	Germany
Kölner Bündnis für gerechten Welthandel	Germany
Zukunftskonvent	Germany
Forum Umwelt & Entwicklung	Germany
Bonner Bündnis gegen TTIP & Co - für solidarischen Welthandel	Germany
Arbeitskreis Freihandelsfalle von Attac München	Germany
Berliner Wassertisch	Germany
foodwatch international	Germany
Sozial- und Schuldnerberatung	Germany
Greenpeace	Global
Naturefriends	Greece
Towards Sustainability Association	Hungary
Clean Air Action Group	Hungary
Zöldövezet Társulás Környezetvédelmi Egyesület	Hungary
Green Circle of Pécs	Hungary
Fauna Alapítvány	Hungary
New Hempage jdoo	Hungary
Eletfa Environmental Protection Association	Hungary
Civilek a Mecsekért Mozgalom	Hungary
Environmental Planning and Education Network	Hungary
Ararát Teremtésvédelmi Munkacsoport (Ararat Care for Creation Workgroup)	Hungary
FEDERATION OF UNITED TRADE UNIONS IN THE ELECTRIC ENERGY INDUSTRY	Hungary
Szombathely-Herény K. Cs. S Egyesület	Hungary
Védegylet Egyesület	Hungary

Tanácsadók a Fenntartható Fejlődésért	Hungary
Vision Association	Hungary
Holocén Természetvédelmi Egyesület	Hungary
Közép-magyarországi Zöld Kör	Hungary
REFLEX Környezetvédő Egyesület	Hungary
Magyarországi Éghajlatvédelmi Szövetség	Hungary
Karátson Gábor Kör	Hungary
Magyar Természetvédők Szövetsége / Friends of the Earth Hungary	Hungary
Heroes of Responsible Dining Foundation	Hungary
Csalán Egyesület	Hungary
Gyermekláncfű Kézműves, Oktatási és Környezetnevelési Egyesület	Hungary
Fényszaruik Baráti Egyesülete	Hungary
Zöld Akció Egyesület (Green Action)	Hungary
Magosfa Foundation	Hungary
Profilantrop Association	Hungary
GRAIN	international
Good Energies Alliance Ireland	Ireland
Feasta: the Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability	Ireland
Irish Seed Savers Association CLG	Ireland
Fracking Free Clare	Ireland
An Cláíomh Glas	Ireland
An Taisce - the National Trust for Ireland	Ireland
Fairwatch	Italy
Stop TTIP/CETA Italia	Italy
transform! italia	Italy
Latvian Fund for Nature	Latvia
Mouvement Ecologique asbl	Luxembourg
Both ENDS	Netherlands
Transnational Institute	Netherlands
We&waste	Poland
Instytut Globalnej Odpowiedzialności (IGO)	Poland
Stowarzyszenie Rozruch	Poland

Pro-Terra Foundation	Poland
TROCA- Plataforma por um Comércio Internacional Justo	Portugal
ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System	Portugal
CEPTA	Slovakia
SOSNA	Slovakia
Umanotera	Slovenia
Focus Association for Sustainable Development	Slovenia
ASiA-Associació Salut i Agroecologia	Spain
Campanya Catalunya No als Tractats de Comerç i Inversió	Spain
Campaña No a los Tratados de Comercio e Inversión	Spain
Ecoogistas en Acción	Spain
Coag (Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Agricultores y Ganaderos)	Spain
CONFEDERACIÓN GENERAL DEL TRABAJO(CGT)	Spain
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy	U.S. and Europe