



Brussels, 27 April 2010

To: Commissioners and Director Generals of DG Environment and DG Enterprise and Industry

Cc: The European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production Roundtable (SCP Roundtable)/Landmark Europe, European Environmental Agency (EEA) and UNEP

Re: Open letter on European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production Roundtable (SCP Roundtable)

The European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production Roundtable was launched one year ago with a purported aim “to embed the food chain as a major contributor to sustainable consumption and production in Europe” and to “gather key food chain players from farm to fork and end-of-life in addition to policy makers, scientists, NGOs and civil society organizations.” [1] The Round Table’s recently launched website mentions that it is supported by the European Commission, the European Environment Agency (EEA) and UNEP.

The promise of inclusion and broad stakeholder participation by the food industry funded organization however has never materialized. Instead of involving key stakeholders in the food chain like consumers, environmentalists, farmers and other members of civil society, the SCP leadership and membership at the time of writing consists entirely of the food and beverage industry. We note that Euro-Coop joined, but as this appears to have happened after the principles were launched for consultation, we question how their views were incorporated. In December 2009, the Round Table announced that it had accepted fourteen new members, all EU level food industry organizations. Civil society was largely unaware of the Roundtable until the consultation was announced by the SCP in March and a broad range of NGOs with different perspectives on food and agriculture issues were not invited to join as founders.

In any case, the €5,000 cost of Membership in the SCP Roundtable is a prohibitive barrier for most NGOs and guarantees that the dialogue will continue to be dominated by corporate interests. [2]

Many serious weak points in the sustainability of the food chain are already well known and understood, from wastage in storage and transport to over-packaging and promotion of reliance on unhealthy ready-made meals based on chemically-dependent industrial monoculture. Improvement in any of these areas would be most welcome and could begin

today. But a Round Table consisting of industry insiders only is fundamentally ill-equipped to seriously address these problems.

The agenda and mission of the Roundtable do not reflect the key questions that environmental, social and consumers' groups have about the sustainability of the entire food chain, in particular socio-economic impacts. The exclusive nature of the costly, unaccountable and undemocratic process contravenes the purported broad stakeholder process.

The Commission should not give its imprimatur to such a self-interested, industry-driven process that is likely to achieve nothing but positive public relations spin for the voluntary labelling promoted by food industry lobby groups. We therefore urge the Commission to withdraw its support for the SCP Roundtable.

Yours Sincerely,

Eve Mitchell, Food & Water Europe
Nina Holland, Corporate Europe Observatory
G rard Choplin, European Coordination Via Campesina
Ruediger Stegemann, Seeds Action Network – SAN
Linda Coenen, A SEED Europe
Christine Fouarge, AEFJN (Africa Europe Faith & Justice Network)
Nora McKeon, Terra Nuova, Italy
Maureen Butter, Platform Health and Environment (NL)
Greet Goverde, Platform ABC (platform Aarde Boer consument) (NL)
Guus Geurts, X minus Y Solidarity Fund (NL)
Ferran Garcia, Veterinarians without Borders (ES)
Bente Hesselund Anderson, The Food and Agriculture Group, NOAH-Friends of the Earth (DK)

Notes

1: Invitation to SCP Roundtable 6 May 2009 launch event, see www.endseurope.com/docs/90506a.pdf

2: Although the Roundtable has informally suggested that some environmental groups might receive some reduction, these groups are obligated to approach the Roundtable hat in hand for ad hoc admission to the body. There has been no provision for other stakeholders like consumer groups at all.