

Public launch of

“The Supply Chain Initiative - Together for good trading practices”

Monday 16 September 2013, Brussels

Speaking Notes for Mella Frewen

Introduction

- Good afternoon everyone. I am very pleased to be with you today as Director General of FoodDrinkEurope, representing Europe’s Food and Drink manufacturing industry.
- We have many members in common with AIM – the European Brands Association – with whom we collaborated closely throughout this entire process. (Alain, thank you and your colleagues for the excellent work!)
- I think I can therefore safely say that I represent today the entire European Food and Drink manufacturing industry.
- We are the largest manufacturing sector in Europe in terms of employment and in terms of turnover (which is more than 1 trillion Euros).
- This “Supply Chain Initiative” will have an important impact on our sector.
- I fully support what Philip Clarke said earlier.
- The Initiative may not be perfect, there may be room for improvement, but we have collectively done a tremendous job, under very tough timelines. There was – and is – a lot of good will.
- Our discussions and negotiations over the last two years have built trust and better understanding between all the players involved.
- It was hard work, and some tears were shed, but in the end, differences were ironed out.
- All the ingredients for success were there:
 - **Dialogue** between all parties concerned. Leading to **Mutual understanding** and finally to a **Common vision**.
 - **Constructive attitudes**: discussions were not just talk shops; there was, all through the process, a genuine willingness to reach consensus and results.
 - Most importantly there was a **will to build trust**. Let’s not forget that we started out back to back. Then we moved to “looking at each other eye to eye”, and now we are all looking in the same direction. We have certainly come a long way over these past 2 years and I think we can be proud of what we have achieved.
- The Initiative is quite **Novel**; it applies to the whole chain, allowing all the operators to address unfair trading practices equally. It is an example of self-regulation which involves more than one economic operator.

- The multi-stakeholder approach has resulted in a constructive relationship between the Associations involved, and we hope that this **culture change** will spread across Member States, as Associations at national levels follow suite. This would also be quite a significant step.
- When we started out on this adventure, our first step was to acknowledge that there was a problem in the first place – and even this was not given.
- We have worked against very tight timelines with a real sense of **urgency**.
- The result, our **Supply Chain Initiative**, puts in place a solution that is flexible and minimises costs for companies while ensuring effectiveness.
- It is **voluntary** and will demonstrate that the operators who sign up are committed to acting **responsibly**.
- Signatories commit to respecting both the Principles of Good Practice and the Framework's governance process. To date, we have several hundred signatories mostly from large companies but we are hopeful that more medium and smaller companies will also join.
- This is the beginning of the process of course, not the end It is Day 1.
- We have launched our website; we have made tools available to all our companies so that they can sign up and use the Initiative efficiently: self-assessment tools, e-learning tools, on line registration etc... so we have ticked all the boxes to make this launch a success.
- But only time will tell if **The Supply Chain Initiative** will be successful.
- We intend to publish an Annual report and carry out annual surveys to see how **The Initiative** is performing.
- I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate everyone who has been involved in this process. In particular, all our partners across the food chain, but also V.P. Tajani and Commissioner Barnier for their support as members of the High Level Forum.
- Without the support of the Commission and its fonctionnaires, and the structure of the High Level Forum, I sincerely believe we would not be where we are today.
- The European Parliament has obviously also played an important role – and particularly Anna-Maria Corazza Bildt, who kept us constantly under pressure to do more, better, faster!
- Finally I would like to encourage those operators in the chain who have not signed up to **The Initiative**, to do so, and particularly the farming community. Copa-Cogeca has been a constructive player - but at a certain point, regrettably, we had to move along without them. Our chain is missing a particularly important link from a food industry perspective.
- Thanks to the “Supply Chain Initiative”, the Food and Drink Industry looks forward to seeing a substantial and measurable reduction of unfair commercial practices in our food supply chain, to the benefit of all its operators and especially, to the benefit of the EU Consumer!
- Thank you.