

PRESS RELEASE
Brussels, 6 December 2012

Retail welcomes Commission's preference for a voluntary approach on B2B trading practices

Yesterday, at the meeting of the High-Level Forum on a better functioning food supply chain, 8 EU-level organisations representing commerce and industry announced the agreement on a framework for the implementation and enforcement of the principles of good practice in the food supply chain (still to be reviewed and validated by their members). The European Commission has expressed a preference for a voluntary approach over legislation. This approach should deliver rapidly.

The proposed scheme is based on the voluntary registration by companies in the food supply chain with specific commitments to respect and integrate the principles into their daily business practices. The framework foresees a procedure to handle any disputes through a choice of options that aim to reassure that complainants will not be subject to commercial retaliation.

The framework, based on a dialogue and voluntary engagement by economic operators should bring company ownership and culture change in the supply chain. And this, not only in EU circles but on the ground in every Member State. We already see signs of this happening, for example in Belgium, the Netherlands and Slovenia.

We welcome the Commission's preference for a voluntary approach as a strong signal of support. We realise that the window of opportunity will close soon. We are aware of the responsibility entrusted upon us. That is why we will be working with our members to finalise and endorse the framework and call upon them to signal their commitment to the principles early on. This will enable us to reach a critical mass of engagement, in line with the expectations of the Commission, the Parliament and stakeholders.

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