

Brussels, 18 May 2020
Sent by email only
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Dear Professor Frece,

On behalf of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors of the European Commission's Scientific Advice Mechanism¹, I would like to convey to you my gratitude and appreciation for the contribution made by Prof. Verica Dragović-Uzelac to our scientific opinion, "Towards a Sustainable Food System"², which was adopted on 31 March 2020. Prof. Dragović-Uzelac is one of the authors of the SAPEA³ consortium's evidence review report, "A Sustainable Food System for the European Union"⁴. This report was published on 9 April 2020 and underpins many of the recommendations we make in our scientific advice. In doing so, it strengthens the case for these recommendations to be taken into account by the College of European Commissioners in policy making in this area. Indeed, the scientific opinion is already informing the development of the 'Farm to Fork Strategy', a major aspect of the European Green Deal⁵.

As you will be aware, food and sustainability are areas receiving significant media attention and public concern. The food system involves many stakeholders – in principle even everybody as consumer/citizen – with different views and understandings. Much of the debate is about 'what' food system model should be favoured (global/local, agro-ecological/industrial, organic, etc.). However, 'how' to achieve a food system transition in general and insights from social sciences have received little attention in these debates, as well as in policy advice. With this scientific opinion, we attempted to address these gaps and provide a better understanding of the mechanisms underlying the complexity and possible adaptability of the food system, informing policy makers' efforts to enable its transformation to sustainability.

The participation of scientists such as Prof. Dragović-Uzelac in this work has been crucial for the independence, quality and relevance of the scientific advice provided. My fellow Chief Scientific Advisors and I are very grateful that they have participated voluntarily. We are aware that such work is not easily captured by traditional scientific/academic metrics and impact criteria and that is also why I am keen to underline the vital importance of her participation. Recognition of this kind of work is very important, not only to remind the public and policy stakeholders of the importance of scientific evidence for effective policy making, but also within the academic world to ensure that the best scientists continue to contribute to this process.

I hope you share these sentiments and that, as a result, you will continue to look favourably on the participation of your academic staff in such public service work.

Yours sincerely,



Rolf Heuer
Chair of the Group of Chief Scientific Advisors
and former Director-General of CERN

Cc: Prof. Keskitalo, Prof. Bujnicki, Prof. Dykstra, Sir Paul Nurse, Prof. Grobert, Prof. Fortunato, Prof. Petersen, Prof. Cloetingh, Prof. Loprieno, Prof. Griffin, Prof. Charpentier, Prof. Courvoisier, Prof. Hüttl, Dr. Tschirhart, Mr. Hielscher, Prof. John Thøgersen; Prof. Peter Jackson; Dr. Jeroen Candel; Prof. Erik Mathijs; Prof. Alf Håkon Hoel; Prof. Marianne Penker; Dr. Hugo de Vries, Prof. Anna Davies; Prof. Lotte Holm; Prof. Cristiane Derani; Prof. Verica Dragović-Uzelac; Dr. Ruta Śpiewak; Dr. Marta Guadalupe Rivera Ferre; Dr. Ikink, Dr. Zegers, Dr. Kwiecinski, Ms Ascher.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/support-policy-making/scientific-support-eu-policies/group-chief-scientific-advisors_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/support-policy-making/scientific-support-eu-policies/group-chief-scientific-advisors/towards-sustainable-food-system_en

³ Science Advice for Policy by European Academies

⁴ <https://www.sapea.info/wp-content/uploads/sustainable-food-system-report.pdf>

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal_en