

Press Release

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The Council approves the EU School Fruit Scheme

The European Agriculture and Health Consortium (EAHC) welcomes the Commissions EU School Fruit Scheme.

Today, the council of agriculture ministers approved the proposal for an EU School Fruit Scheme. The School Fruit Scheme aims at increasing fruit and vegetable consumption in children by providing free fruits and vegetables in European schools.

The scheme will provide € 90 M per year to schools to purchase fruits and vegetables. The scheme is part of the Commission response to increase fruit and vegetable consumption as part of their obesity prevention strategy. Currently fruit and vegetable intake is stagnating, which is a problem for both the health of Europeans and the fruit and vegetable sector.

“Fruit and vegetables are an important part of healthy diet. Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption in children can reduce energy intake and at the same time provide valuable nutrients that in the long term can reduce levels of Cardiovascular Disease (CVD). Given the alarming rate at which obesity is progressing, especially among children, bringing with it other health related problems such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease, a European School Fruit Scheme is a necessary step in the right direction” says Susanne Logstrup, Director of the EHN.

“We commend the Commission and the Council of Agriculture Ministers for this action. This represents a new direction in the Common Agriculture Policy (CAP), specifically targeting healthier eating habits at an early age”, explains Robert Pederson EAHC manager. “We hope that this initiative is backed up by Member States and implemented by as many as possible.”

Yesterday, the EP voted unanimously adopting the report on the School Fruit Scheme. The report includes an amendment to increase the budget to € 500 M. Despite this, the Commission has remained steadfast on € 90 M for the first 3 yrs and evaluating the programme before expanding the budget. It is expected that review of scheme will come in

time to feed into the post-2013 CAP, if successful, making more public health measures possible within European agriculture policy.

The European Agriculture and Health Consortium's main objective is to advocate for health promoting agriculture policy in Europe. The European Heart Network, North West Health Brussels Office, National Heart Forum and Heart of Mersey are charter members.

The European Heart Network (EHN) is a Brussels-based alliance of heart foundations and other concerned non-governmental organisations throughout Europe. EHN has 31 members in 26 countries. The European Heart Network plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular disease through advocacy, networking and education so that it is no longer a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe, see: www.ehnheart.org