

UNESDA releases its Manifesto for the 2024-2029 EU political term

Brussels, 26 February 2024: As the European Union prepares for a new legislative cycle, the European soft drinks sector, represented by UNESDA, has published its Manifesto¹, outlining its key ambitions and policy priorities for the 2024-2029 EU political term. The Manifesto highlights the sector's commitment to promoting balanced diets, driving environmental sustainability across its supply chain and maintaining its competitive position as a key contributor to the European economy.

Unveiling the Manifesto, Peter Harding, President of UNESDA and CEO of Suntory Beverage & Food International, stated: *"As we launch our EU Manifesto, I am thrilled to present the European soft drinks sector's vision for the next political term in the EU. We will be driven by our unwavering commitment to advancing sustainability and promoting healthier lifestyles. We will also strive to sustain our competitive position as a sector with a strong local dimension (over 500 production sites in Europe), actively contributing to prosperity and employment in Europe by supporting over 1.8 million jobs, both directly and throughout our supply chain."*

Mr. Harding added: *"We hope for a new EU political strategy that prioritises realistic and evidence-driven policies, based on thorough impact assessments, and fosters continuous dialogue with all sectors."*

UNESDA's Manifesto is built around three key ambitions related to competitiveness, health and nutrition, and environment, and sets out the sector's main policy asks. These can be summarised as:

AMBITION 1: A more sustainable and competitive soft drinks sector

The sector is committed to creating continued value for Europe's economy and citizens in the transition to a more sustainable and healthier food system. It calls on policymakers to:

1. Establish a **streamlined legislative approach**, providing regulatory certainty with workable timescales, ensuring new legislation is science-based, and undertaking appropriate and thorough impact assessments;
2. Secure a **strong single market at the heart of EU policy**, with uniform implementation of EU food and environmental legislation;
3. Promote **fairness across the food supply chain** to ensure everyone plays their part and there is **no discrimination against any specific food, drink or ingredient**.

AMBITION 2: Helping Europeans to lead healthier lifestyles

The sector is committed to further supporting healthier lifestyles by intensifying its efforts in reducing the average sugar content in its soft drinks, promoting responsible marketing and advertising practices to children under 13 years of age, and implementing stringent school policies. It calls on policymakers to:

1. Ensure **up-to-date and reliable pan-European monitoring** of food and drink consumption intakes and patterns to better understand what interventions can be effective;
2. Develop **evidence-based policies** that do not discriminate against ingredients approved as safe for use by health authorities, and which enable food innovation;
3. Support **science-based, harmonised and non-discriminatory labelling policies** to help consumers make informed choices.

AMBITION 3: Driving environmental sustainability throughout our value chain

The sector is committed to advancing sustainability across its value chain by undertaking a wide range of actions to reduce its carbon footprint, protect water resources, improve energy efficiency and achieve packaging circularity. It calls on policymakers to:

1. Ensure **well-designed collection schemes** and a **sufficient supply of food-grade feedstock** for recycling to enable closed-loop recycling, when appropriate;
2. Incentivise **investments in carbon emission reduction** (renewable energy, increased access to low-carbon energy, collection and recycling infrastructure);
3. Put water high on the political agenda and encourage investments in infrastructure promoting the **conservation and restoration of water resources** and providing **fair and equitable access to water** for citizens and businesses.

The European soft drinks sector will maintain an active and constructive engagement with policymakers and all stakeholders to help develop enabling and science-based policies that are truly effective and bring benefits for the environment, consumers and businesses.

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Notes to Editors

¹ The full UNESDA's Manifesto is available [here](#).

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About UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe

Established in 1958, UNESDA Soft Drinks Europe is the Brussels-based trade association representing the non-alcoholic beverages sector. Its membership comprises 10 companies and 25 national associations from across Europe. UNESDA members are involved in the production and/or distribution of a wide variety of non-alcoholic beverages including still drinks, carbonated drinks, energy drinks, iced teas, flavoured waters and sports drinks.



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