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Subject: Subsidised advertising campaigns for meat  
CC: Commissioner Frans Timmermans  
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Amsterdam, 13 February 2020

Dear Commissioner Wojciechowski,

Research carried out by the Dutch non-governmental organization Wakker Dier shows that tens of millions of euros past few years went to advertising campaigns for meat in Europe. These campaigns are subsidised through the EU scheme *Promotion of agricultural products (Regulation (EU) No 1144/2014)*. We urge you to revise this scheme so that it is in line with the European Commission's objectives in the field of climate change (Green Deal) and public health.

### **Consequences of high meat consumption**

From a public health point of view, meat consumption in prosperous countries, such as in Europe, is considerably higher than it should be.<sup>1</sup> In the Netherlands, for example, the average meat consumption is 700 grams per week. Official dietary advice recommends a maximum of 500 grams per week in total, including a maximum of 300 grams of red meat and as little processed meat as possible.

Current levels of meat consumption are also a major problem from the point of view of climate change and biodiversity loss. A recent study showed that halving the consumption of meat, dairy and eggs in the European Union, would reduce food related nitrogen emissions by 40 percent, greenhouse gas emissions by 25 to 40 percent and land use by 23 percent. The European Union would become a net exporter of cereals, while the use of soybean meal would be reduced by 75 percent.<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that governments subsidise campaigns to entice consumers to reduce their meat consumption. The Dutch public health campaign "*Er is meer dan vlees*" (There is more than meat) and the climate campaign "*Iedereen doet wat*" (Everyone contributes) are examples of this.

### **European subsidy policy**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/change-your-diet-save-both-water-and-your-health>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0959652616307570>

In recent years, the EU spent tens of millions of euros on meat advertising campaigns that aim to *increase* meat consumption, through the agricultural product information and promotion scheme. As the example below shows, these campaigns have even attempted to use the obvious conflict of interests between meat consumption, public health and climate protection as a reason to promote meat consumption.

The subsidised campaign *Pork lovers Europe* states for example: "*Pork consumption in Europe has fallen in recent years. (...) Therefore, it is very important to promote pork in order to restore consumer confidence, which has been shaken by news such as the latest IARC report*". The IARC report concluded that red and processed meat is likely to cause a higher risk of cancer. Partly on the basis of this IARC report, the official Dutch dietary advice recommends eating less red and processed meat. A goal that *Pork lovers Europe* explicitly aims to counter.

The work programmes for 2019 and 2020 set out the following reason for supporting beef promotion campaigns: "*European beef farmers are facing (...) environmental and climate change challenges*". Beef is one of the most climate-unfriendly foods, a legit reason not to support an increase in its consumption.

For public health and climate reasons, the declining consumption trend of pork and beef is to be welcomed. It is incomprehensible that the European Commission still provides subsidies to undermine these undeniably favourable developments.

## **Request**

We ask you to ensure that such subsidies for meat advertising campaigns quickly become a thing of the past. For example, the scheme could be adapted so that it is cross-compliant with Europe's climate and health objectives. Excluding specific products, such as meat, from this scheme is also an option.

Subsidies granted by the European Commission under the scheme *Promotion of agricultural products* cannot be allowed to nullify efforts in other areas such as climate change (Green Deal) and public health.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Anne Hilhorst  
campaignleader Wakker Dier

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Supplement: Research Report (English abstract)