



## PRESS RELEASE

### **An appetite for the future: FoodDrinkEurope and the European Federation of Food Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) launch youth apprenticeships pledge**

*(Brussels, 16 October 2014)* FoodDrinkEurope together with its social partner, the European Federation of Food Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions (EFFAT) has launched an industry pledge to encourage high quality apprenticeships and traineeships in food and drink manufacturing companies across Europe. This joint initiative was presented to MEPs at an event in the European Parliament earlier today.

With this pledge, FoodDrinkEurope and EFFAT are aiming to respond to one of the greatest challenges facing Europe today: a lack of skills and job opportunities. As Europe's number one employer in the manufacturing sector, the food and drink industry is prepared to play an important role in meeting this challenge by addressing the employability of young people. Specifically, the joint pledge, entitled '*An appetite for the future: Youth apprenticeships in the food and drink industry*' encourages food and drink manufacturers to:

- Provide high quality apprenticeship and traineeship positions
- Organise readiness for work programmes (career consultation, CV clinics, etc.) in close coordination with educational institutions and youth organisations
- Share knowledge and experiences with education providers, authorities at all levels, trade unions, business organisations (with a particular focus on small and medium sized businesses) and youth associations

The launch event was hosted by UK Socialist MEP Siôn Simon, a member of the Parliament's Employment and Social Affairs Committee (EMPL), and featured a panel discussion with a number of speakers including: Dutch EMPL committee MEP Jeroen Lenaers, VP Head of Corporate HR at Nestlé Europe Alfredo Manuel Silva, high-level European Commission officials and a young Spanish employee working at Cargill.

Mella Frewen, FoodDrinkEurope's Director General, said: "*Europe's food and drink industry is traditionally one of Europe's most resilient and dynamic economic sectors, yet today we face serious difficulties to recruit some of the skills we require in order to safeguard our competitive edge. With this pledge, we want to encourage stronger connections between the worlds of business and education; drive up qualifications and foster innovation. Ultimately, we want to ensure a qualified and sustainable labour supply for our industry.*"

*"For the first time social partners are committed to a quality apprenticeship model in signing together this pledge. Alongside universities, apprenticeships in their own right can be an*

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*opportunity for young people leaving school to realize their potential. We are calling for businesses and employers of all sizes to come alongside us. Businesses need to do more to offer a professional career and lifelong education and training. It is not enough to offer just a 'job'. Compared to other sectors, we observe that the food and drink sector is up to now investing less in education and training. Words must be followed by actions and social partners have a decisive role to play.”* added Harald Wiedenhofer, EFFAT’s Secretary General.

Speaking in advance of the event, Siôn Simon MEP said: *“Youth unemployment is the biggest issue that the EU is currently facing. A generation is being denied the dignity and security of paid work. I welcome the apprenticeships pledge from FoodDrinkEurope in collaboration with EFFAT. Europe’s young people can achieve their potential through meaningful secure work and this pledge is an encouraging development.”*

Nonna Casas Soler, Energy Process Engineer at Cargill commented: *“The numbers speak by themselves: youth unemployment is a major social and economic issue and by being part of this initiative I can contribute to raising awareness and making a change by sharing my story. For me, the Cargill European Graduate Program offered the perfect transition from university to professional life; I learned how to apply my technical knowledge and skills in a real working environment, taking more responsibility step by step. And the best part was that I could share this experience with other graduates from all across Europe.”*

**-ENDS-**

Note to editor:

FoodDrinkEurope, the trade organisation representing Europe’s food and drink industry, and EFFAT became social partners in 2012 and jointly commissioned ‘Improve’, the UK Sector Skills Council, and ‘CERES’, the Centre for Economic and Social Research, in 2013, to undertake a study on food and drink manufacturing and processing (FDMP) labour market across the European Union.

The research puts forward important recommendations for the EU food and drink manufacturing and processing sector’s social partners. On the basis of the research findings and in accordance with their work programme, the social partners want to follow up on two complementary objectives of labour market policies: i) to fight youth unemployment and ii) build up labour supply.

FoodDrinkEurope and EFFAT have been awarded a grant by the European Commission to address the challenges of youth unemployment and better management of older workers in a project entitled *“Bringing in new talents and managing an ageing workforce: two sides of the same coin. Implementing good practices for a more attractive food and drink industry in Europe.”*

This project, to be finalised by mid-2016, will support social partners to strengthen traineeship and apprenticeship programmes, develop career pathways, ensure a sustainable workforce in the future and keep the sector attractive for the workforce already engaged.

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