



Unilever European Works Council

UEWC

Press release

**Wanted: Responsible Owner
Making Spreads Fit for the Future**

On 6 April Unilever announced a series of measures in response to the Kraft Heinz takeover bid. One of these measures is the planned sale of the margarine business. The plan has attracted criticism from the works councils and EFFAT (European Federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions). “Margarine is the UNI in UNI-LEVER. The company will be abandoning one of the pillars on which it was founded: part of its name and part of its history. This historic decision directly affects over 1,000 workers in Europe”, said Harald Wiedenhofer, General Secretary of EFFAT.

“The problems in margarine are home-grown”, confirmed Hermann Soggeberg, Chair of Unilever’s European Works Council. “Unilever was far too slow in reacting to changing consumer habits. At the same time it invested more heavily in other business lines like personal care and in other parts of the world. As I see it, the food business was criminally neglected”.

When margarine became a separate business back in 2015 the works councils suspected it could be in preparation for a sale. But Unilever repeatedly denied this. “And now they’re doing it after all”, says a greatly disappointed Hermann Soggeberg. “If Unilever really goes ahead with this plan, we expect them to find a buyer who will handle the business and its workers responsibly”. The European Works Council has drawn up an initial list of demands, in conjunction with worker representatives from the margarine business across Europe and EFFAT, the European trade union federation. This list should already be influencing any talks about a sale.

This list was delivered in person by Hermann Soggeberg to Unilever CEO Paul Polman and Head of Spreads Nicolas Liabeuf.

The main aim is to secure the future of the business and its workers. Specifically this means the retention of all existing locations and jobs and the preservation of all existing employment conditions, including pension commitments.

Any potential buyer must be interested in the margarine business for the long term and have a sustainable business plan.

The European Works Council expects to be involved as early as possible in those parts of the sale process of relevance to the employees. “This definitely cannot just be about getting the highest possible sale price if it’s at the workers’ expense. We will be watching this very closely”.

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