



Only healthy workers can feed Europe

As Covid-19 vaccinations achieve regulatory approval in the EU, European trade union federation [EFFAT](#), food manufacturers association [FoodDrinkEurope](#) and agricultural employers' association [GEOPA-COPA](#) have urged Member States to consider the food and drink workforce as a priority group in their vaccination plans. They have issued the following joint statement:

The approval and availability of vaccines against Covid-19 is a huge step forward in the fight against the global pandemic. Vaccinating the entire EU population will take significant time, and due to the limited number of doses available not everybody can be immunised immediately.

The European Commission has provided guidelines to Member States when developing their vaccination strategies. It has noted six priority groups including health care workers, the vulnerable and elderly, and “essential sectors outside the health sector” including agriculture and food sector workers. The Commission urged Member States to “consider” these priority groups.

On this basis:

- We strongly recommend Member States to take up the Commission recommendation to include all agriculture and food sector workers as a priority group as they develop their national vaccination strategies.
- We urge Member States to consult the social partners, including sectoral social partners, in the process of developing their vaccination rollout.

When Covid-19 first hit, food workers were categorised as ‘essential workers’ in many Member States and our dedicated workforce continued to work throughout the pandemic to ensure that food has been available to every citizen in Europe, often risking their own health.

Food security can only be ensured when the health and safety of the workers in the food and drink industry is protected and production can run smoothly. This holds true in the workplaces, as well as when considering a vaccination strategy.

ENDs

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About us:

[FoodDrinkEurope](#) represents the food manufacturing industry. Made up of 294,000 businesses and 4.7 million workers, the food and drink industry buys 70% of all EU agricultural produce and is Europe's largest manufacturing industry.

[EFFAT](#) is the European federation of Food, Agriculture and Tourism Trade Unions. As a European Trade Union Federation with 2.6 million members, representing 120 national trade unions from 35 European countries, EFFAT defends the interests of more than 22 million workers employed long the food chain. EFFAT is a member of the ETUC and the European regional organisation of the IUF.

[GEOPA-COPA](#) is the Employers' Group of Professional Agricultural Organisations in the European Union. GEOPA-COPA represents over 22 million European farmers in the areas of employment and social affairs, supporting COPA-COGECA in a combined effort to promote the best interest of the agricultural sector among the EU institutions and other relevant stakeholders.