



MINISTÈRE  
DE L'AGRICULTURE  
ET DE L'ALIMENTATION

*Liberté  
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# The National Food Conference (Egalim) in France

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An example of a broad-based national dialogue for the transition to sustainable food systems



■ ÉTATS  
GÉNÉRAUX  
ALIMEN  
TATION

#EGalim

[egalimentation.gouv.fr](https://egalimentation.gouv.fr)



The National Food Conference (États généraux de l'alimentation - EGA) took place from July 20 to December 21, 2017, under the political impetus of the President of the Republic, who had pledged to launch this vast national consultation with the ambition to collectively build new solutions for a healthy, safe, sustainable and accessible food for all, while allowing farmers and all operators in the sector, to earn decent incomes from their work, because without income, there is no possible transition

# THE PROCESS

## A WIDE-RANGING DIALOGUE

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### ► The objectives

Based on a shared diagnosis, the aim was to define concrete, concerted and bottom-up proposals to meet four objectives:

- to stimulate the creation of value in the sectors and ensure its equitable distribution ;
- to allow farmers to live with dignity from their work through the payment of fair prices;
- to accompany the transformation of production models in order to better respond to consumers' needs and expectations;
- to promote consumption choices that favor healthy, safe and sustainable food.

### ► A participatory and innovative process to mobilize collective intelligence:

- **14 inclusive national workshops** brought together **700 participants**. For each of these workshops, there were a scoping meeting, discussion meetings and a phase of synthesis of proposals;
- the involvement of all stakeholders with the mobilization of **11 ministries, farmers, agri-food industries, distribution, collective catering, consumer representatives, elected officials, workers and employers' unions, actors of the social economy sector, charities and food aid associations, NGOs , banks and insurance companies**;
- public debates anchored in the territory: **74 events in rural or urban territories**;
- **1 public consultation** via an online platform, with **156,000 visitors** and **17,000 collected contributions**, generating a strong media interest with **9,800 press articles** over the period.

# THE DELIVERABLES

## A SET OF AMBITIOUS VOLUNTARY AND REGULATORY MEASURES

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### A comprehensive roadmap established for the 2018-2022 period

Presented on December 21, 2017 by the Prime Minister at the closing of the EGA/ National Food Conference, the roadmap includes the main recommendations and proposals for operational actions resulting from the consultation, grouped around three axes.

- **Ensuring France's food sovereignty.** This involves ensuring the sustainability of agricultural production capacity through strengthening the economic viability of farms (working in particular on price negotiations mechanisms), through the transformation of agricultural and agri-food systems, and through the support to the renewal of generations of farmers. The aim is also to strengthen the agri-food industry and to promote and support the sectors in an open world; A strong ambition for the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will be carried in order to meet the expectations of citizens and economic actors, notably by strengthening risk management, by promoting environmental services and climatic, energetic and territorial transitions.
- **Promoting healthy and environmental friendly food choices,** by adopting an approach to food that combines nutritional balance and pleasure, but also by ensuring a consistently high level of food safety (including by developing strategies on a European scale) and finally, by supporting production methods that respect the environment and animal welfare.
- **Reducing inequalities in the access to quality and sustainable food,** by relying on collective catering, by reinforcing the fight against food loss and waste, by promoting the development of food donations, by focusing on education and consumer information, and by ensuring an approach consistent with international actions.

The implementation of the roadmap is based on the mobilization of a variety of tools and levers: law, regulations, sector plans, CAP, charters, vade mecum, communication campaigns, territorial food projects, research and innovation, observation and monitoring platforms, monitoring tools, the Great Investment Plan, etc., the most emblematic of which are described below.

## The mobilization of economic actors through «sector plans»

The President of the Republic has asked the interprofessions to draw up plans for the development and transformation of the agricultural and agri-food sectors. These «sector plans» will contribute at their level, to the implementation of solutions to meet the four objectives set by the EGA/National Food Conference.

In terms of method, developing these sector plans will empower and give responsibility to the different actors and promote the development of producer organisations (POs) as well as strengthen inter-professions in order to stimulate dialogue between players in the same sector. The sector plans deal with issues of remuneration, price determination and the organisation of the distribution of added value and, finally, with the improvement of production methods (environmental commitments). The sector plans have been approved by the boards of directors of the inter-professional organisations as well as, when necessary, by representatives of economic actors of the sector not represented in the interprofession. They were then sent to the Minister of Agriculture and Food. In order to facilitate access to the content of the sector plans, the Ministry has published on its website the 29 “sector plans” it has received, with the agreement of the involved interprofessions:

→ <https://agriculture.gouv.fr/egalim-les-plans-de-filieres>

## The EGalim law

At the end of the National Food Conference/EGA, a parliamentary process was launched to pass the «law for balanced relations in the agricultural and food sector and a healthy, sustainable and accessible food sustainable and accessible to all» known as the Egalim law, promulgated on November 1, 2018. This law includes a number of measures with the dual aim of restoring balance in the commercial relations between the producers and the distribution sector (Title I of the law: Provisions to improve the balance of commercial relations in the agricultural and food sector) and to make accessible a healthy and sustainable food for all consumers (Title II of the law: measures in favour of healthy, quality, sustainable food, accessible to all and respectful of animal welfare).

The main measures are the following:

- **Allow farmers to have a decent income by improving the distribution of the value**
  - to rebalance the relations between upstream and downstream with a reinforcement of contractualisation;
  - to put an end to a value-destroying price war, including an overhaul of the applicable provisions of the commercial code.

### ► **Improve the sanitary and environmental conditions of production**

- to ban neonicotinoids and products with identical modes of action, in order to protect biodiversity and bees;
- to separate the sales and advice activities for plant protection products and to prohibit discounts and rebates;
- to suspend the use of titanium dioxide in food products;
- to protect local residents in the vicinity of plant protection treatment areas.

### ► **Strengthen animal welfare**

- to extend the offence of animal abuse in animal husbandry to transport and slaughter activities. Doubling of the penalties to 1 year in prison and a €15,000 fine;
- to open possibility for animal protection associations to sue for damages;
- to appoint an animal protection officer in each slaughterhouse. Every employee acquires a status of whistleblower;
- to experiment with video surveillance in voluntary slaughterhouses;
- to prohibit the production of any new or refurbished caged laying hen building.

### ► **Promote healthy, safe and sustainable food for all**

- 50% of products with signs of origin and quality in public catering by 2022;
- to intensify the fight against food waste: contractualisation with charitable associations (donations in the framework of collective catering and the food industry);
- possibility of taking away food or drinks not consumed on the premises in restaurants and pubs.

### ► **Reduce the use of plastic in food**

- to ban plastic cooking, reheating and serving containers in local government catering by 2025;
- to ban plastic stirrers and straws in restaurants, take-out shops, canteens and food shops in 2020;
- to ban plastic water bottles in school cafeterias in 2020.

## A concrete implementation that is part of the long term

In addition to the EGalim law, a number of specific plans have been developed in line with the EGA roadmap. This is particularly true of the Bioeconomy plan, the “Ambition bio” plan, the “Ecophyto II” plan, etc.

Innovative tools continue to be put in place, such as the government’s digital platform «ma cantine» (information and support for stakeholders involved in sustainable collective catering), which is currently being tested in the school catering sector, or the recent publication of a practical guide for buyers of directly managed collective catering. This guide is a support tool for the implementation of the objective of increasing the quality of supplies set by the EGalim law, including a minimum of 50% of sustainable and quality products, and at least 20% organic products, in meals served in collective catering as of January 1, 2022. Another example is the recently adopted national strategy on plant proteins.

Follow-up tools have also been put in place, such as financing tools that should serve the transition of food systems, or the monitoring committee on trade relations, which has made it possible to carry out an initial assessment of the trade negotiations completed on March 1, 2021. On this occasion, a report analysing the limits of the current regulatory framework as well as the persistent sticking points observed between the actors all along the food chain, was submitted and formulates several proposals for improvement. The implementation of the transition launched by the National Food Conference/EGA is therefore a long-term process.

# LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE PROCESS

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The National Food Conference/États généraux have demonstrated the value of an open dialogue, bringing together all stakeholders in an inclusive manner, in order to bring out points of convergence in a collective intelligence approach, based on a better mutual understanding and a better knowledge of the realities of all stakeholders.

However, it should be noted that some points of divergence sometimes remained between the stakeholders, requiring political arbitration. The questions that have been the subject of persistent debate are, in particular:

- the question of the pace and scope of implementation of the transition (e.g., targets and pace of reduction in the use of plant protection products)
- the choice of tools (voluntary approaches versus binding approaches enshrined in legislation, experiments versus immediate implementation for all);
- the means mobilized for the transition (judged insufficient by some);
- the difficulties in agreeing on the right distribution of value along the chain (divergent interests of the different actors in the chain);
- the difficulty of implementing certain proposals within the existing legislative framework and/or current international obligations (WTO framework, etc.).

Finally, one of the main lessons learned is the importance of monitoring and evaluating the concrete repercussions of the measures and the need to provide for rendez-vous clauses, in order to be part of a continuous progress approach and to obtain concrete results and adapt to changes in the context and the realities on the ground.

## Conclusion

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- The National Food Conference/EGA experience has highlighted the importance of a strong political will to accompany change: the commitment of the Government to initiate reforms is a crucial point.
- The mobilisation and inclusion of all stakeholders is essential to define public policies that provide a comprehensive response to societal, environmental and economic issues, and to empower all stakeholders, without whom nothing can be done.
- The transformation of food systems is a long-term process and requires regular evaluation and monitoring.