

WUWM Retail Declaration

Rotterdam, The Netherlands

15 June 2013

On the occasion of the 6th World Union of Wholesale Markets (WUWM) Retail Conference held in Rotterdam, The Netherlands on 15 June 2013, under the theme: "The Future of Food Markets", delegates from 10 countries gathered to express unanimous agreement of the following:

- We urge European decision-makers to consider that the food retail sector employs more than 30% (over 15 million) of all people working in the food chain in Europe. We ask for recognition that shifts in consumer behaviour, changing values, and a more regional consumer orientation, means sectors in food retailing must be free to adapt also.
- To avoid a further decline of the current 80 000 people working in the Dutch food retail sector (i.e. food shops and markets, not supermarkets) a new positive format for food retail markets is needed. We urge local government, not only in the Netherlands, but throughout Europe, to rethink its current short-term vision that ultimately favours only the supermarkets and large discounters, contributing to lost jobs, lost inner-city vitality and life. We urge decision-makers to act in the long-term interests of consumers and local/small food businesses by ensuring fresh food retail markets are prominent considerations in urban planning. We ask for decision-maker understanding and acknowledgement of the importance of markets to: real entrepreneurship and jobs; the defense of food product diversity, taste and quality; education and thereby protection of public health; and their promotion of a true business environment that complements city life and authentic human values.
- To be effective, public retail markets (whether open-air or covered) require efficient public space, excellent market management, investment, and attention to best practice. We note the many achievements seen in these areas in recent public-private partnerships and clearly a shift towards more cooperation and awareness is needed. We believe the key four areas that will attract and bind future consumers are: availability, choice, service and convenience. To support markets in offering those, local governments are urged to be more open minded, and to increase their flexibility and support for concrete initiatives as may be presented by the private sector.
- Sometimes to achieve these ambitions a scale of operation is also needed... a variety of food retailers teaming together to offer place, scale and variety. And while combining 'focus on the client' with scale is one step, 'convenience' must also be added.
- As sector professionals we believe that with the above elements of better recognition, better urban planning, long-term investment in public markets, improved market management, alongside teaming up and ensuring a renewed focus on the consumer, the negative trend of the declining number of visitors on markets and the high numbers of closures of small food retail shops can be stopped. The revival (and survival) of food specialists is vital for vast and well-documented socio-economic reasons - not only in The Netherlands, but in cities and towns all over the world.

In closing, we take this opportunity to thank VGSA for hosting this event, and to wish both the new Markthal (currently under construction) and the Binnenrotte Retail Market in the City of Rotterdam, bright and successful futures.