



# ALL TOGETHER:

## Building the fruit juice industry's first sector-wide Sustainability Roadmap

An interview with Bruno Van Gompel and Wouter Lox from AIJN, European Fruit Juice Association

**The European Fruit Juice Association (AIJN) is bringing together all stakeholders from the European fruit juice industry and beyond to establish a first, industry-wide Sustainability Roadmap for the sector. The project's first priority is to reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, as defined by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi).**

AIJN has been pivotal in bringing all fruit juice industry players together

for 60 years now. As facilitators of a truly global value chain, the sector is in a unique position to address sustainability on a wider scale and make an impact. For this reason, AIJN has committed to fostering collaboration like never before by building the first ever sector wide Sustainability Roadmap for the fruit juice industry. The project aims to define science based targets to achieve climate neutrality and lay out

indicative actions for the industry to meet them in the years to come. Sustainability has been one of AIJN's pillars and a key component of its members' activities for a long time, so what exactly is going to change with the Roadmap's establishment? Bruno Van Gompel, leader of the Sustainability Roadmap project and Wouter Lox, Secretary General of AIJN will walk us through the ambition, the process, the partnerships and the



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Wouter Lox

leadership this exercise requires to deliver on the sector’s ambitions.

**Fruit Juice Focus (FJF): How did the project start? What was the idea behind embarking on the Roadmap journey?**

**Bruno Van Gompel (BVG):** The idea of the Roadmap came in a meeting where a couple of us were discussing how can we best support the industry in critical areas and how can we accelerate sector wide collaboration. We looked at what other industries were doing. We concluded that tackling the ‘sustainability challenge’ is crucial and collaboration across the whole value chain is a necessity. The need for an industry specific Sustainability Roadmap soon emerged.

**Wouter Lox (WL):** There are important distinctions to be made between companies’ own sustainability pursuits, AIJN’s previous sustainability work and this new sector wide initiative. The trigger on AIJN’s end to start the road mapping exercise was the push from the industry to work towards the same targets together, ‘under one umbrella’. We need each other to successfully meet sustainability targets and AIJN is in a position to coordinate.

**FJF: What actions have been taken so far and what is the projected workflow of the roadmap?**

**BVG:** Sustainability is incredibly broad and it covers many topics. All of these topics are important, but some really tend to stand out. As a first step, we needed to map what’s out there that already exists and what’s coming your way; then we had to prioritise. To be more concrete, we have reviewed all EU legislation concerning sustainability that has either already been enforced or is in progress to be adopted. On top of our research on the European level, we spoke to national representatives, partner associations and industry experts to gather their insights on sustainability hotspots in their respective countries.

Based on the legislative overview and the national perspectives, the AIJN Sustainability Expert Group and external stakeholders helped us identify priority topics through a series of interviews. We asked our experts to, based on the initial research, answer a few questions. Which topic has the biggest impact on the entire fruit juice value chain? Which sustainability aspect matters the most to our customers and stakeholders? In which

areas do we need each other’s support and what can individual companies or countries not tackle on their own effectively?

Climate change and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions emerged as top priorities. The overall work and meeting the future objectives of the Roadmap has to come from the fruit juice industry itself, and these are those sustainability challenges that no one else will tackle for us, we have to address them ourselves.

Our next step is to determine the methodology, the project’s scope and our sector’s science-based net zero targets as defined by the Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi). Once we have the endorsement of the AIJN leadership and membership, we will establish a working group to set the baseline, to identify the gaps and to define the actions that are necessary to close these gaps. It is a challenging target, but we have foreseen to publish the Roadmap by the end of 2022.

**FJF: Is the whole fruit juice value chain involved?**

**WL:** For the moment it is difficult to cover the whole value chain without



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losing precision. What is possible, however, is to find commonalities or 'hooks' with other industries' roadmaps to align our efforts in meeting the same targets. This is why cooperation is crucial, not only within the industry, but beyond as well. As an industry we do have a responsibility to make a difference, but we don't have to do it on our own, quite the opposite actually.

**BVG:** I completely agree with that. To me, our success depends on finding solutions together, let it be within our industry or outside. Firstly, we need to have an understanding of the current state of emissions within the fruit juice industry, then we can, and should, go beyond to mobilise resources across the entire value chain. To give you an example; AIJN and the fruit juice industry are too small to address packaging emission on their own, however, packaging is a key aspect of our products. Joining forces with other sectors and other sector associations, that aim to reduce packaging waste can support multiple industries at the same time while delivering on a common target.

**FJF: Can 'new parties' and/or non-AIJN members get involved with the process somehow?**

**WL:** This interview is proof that we are open, transparent and welcoming to fresh faces who are interested in sharing their perspectives with us regarding the Roadmap. We are happy to showcase the workflow of the project to anyone who is interested. With these sort of exchanges, we avoid duplications and we make sure that we are constantly learning through knowledge sharing.

For our members specifically, the legal review we have done regarding all existing and upcoming sustainability legislation on the European level will be available soon through the AIJN website. If this overview is something new parties are interested in, they are also encouraged to get in touch with us.

**FJF: Is there anything else that you would like to add?**

**BVG:** Just a few things I have learnt maybe. As soon as AIJN 'put their head out' with the Roadmap, some

of our international counterparts immediately were open to join forces. When you work with companies, associations or even individuals on sustainability, you don't have to sell it; people are immediately engaged and want to cooperate considering the enormous importance and relevance of this topic. Sustainability is not limited to Europe; it is a global phenomenon, hence it is only fitting that a global supply chain like ours would join the conversation on it.

**WL:** The scope of sustainability is incredibly wide, but AIJN made a successful attempt at making it more digestible. One other important thing to highlight maybe is that European policymakers were also supportive of the Roadmap when the idea first started coming together. Now it's up to our industry to deliver and to meet our objectives. Great, exciting times ahead for us!

*If you are interested to know more about AIJN's Sustainability Roadmap project or AIJN itself, do not hesitate to reach out to Marton Gellert at [marton.gellert@aijn.eu](mailto:marton.gellert@aijn.eu)* ●