

**Ignazio Capuano**  
Chairman

**Jori Ringman**  
Director General

**Dr Ursula von der Leyen**  
President of the European Commission  
Wetstraat 200  
1049 Brussels

Brussels, 23 March 2020

Dear Mrs President,

**Re: Classifying sectors supporting critical value chains for the COVID-19 crisis**

We are writing on behalf of the European pulp and paper industry sector asking for an EU-level classification of sectors supporting critical value chains to ensure vital activities in the society can continue as undisturbed as possible so as to mitigate the harm of the ongoing health crisis.

As a sector, our main priority now is to ensure that EU citizens can access the products that they desperately need for health, hygiene and food purposes in the current lockdown context. For that reason, we are relentlessly working with other industries in our value-chains to guarantee security of supply to our fellow Europeans; Our tissue and hygiene products are of vital importance to citizens; Our substrate is the most reliable medium for news and information; Our fibre-based packaging is essential to safe transport and delivery of all types of food and pharmaceutical supplies. This has been duly reflected in the recent decision by the US Department for Homeland Security<sup>i</sup> and, for instance the Italian<sup>ii</sup> and Finnish government as identifying the sector as part of the critical infrastructure.

**We now call you to take similar action on the EU-level to define critical value chains and to include NACE code 17 in that so as to support us operating, as well as NACE code 18 for the sectors preparing final articles. In the view of approaching season for silviculture and forestry work, NACE code 02.10 would be also important to avoid calamities in forests.**

**We likewise call the European Commission to urge the continued collection of paper and board as it is our critical raw material in Europe. In this context it is**

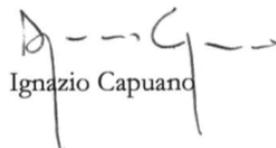
also important to note that the virus is not able to stay viable for long on paper and board<sup>iii</sup> – it therefore can be handled safely throughout the lifecycle, including by consumers.

We commend your Commission for prompt action taken early on in the crisis, in particular in issuing and enforcing the guidelines aiming to step up cooperation among Member States in order to protect the Single Market and the Schengen area. This has obviously required a major effort and acting with a strong sense of responsibility, beyond normal operation of civil service, by your staff which we highly appreciate.

**Ensuring free movement of goods in the EU internal market, including operation of the key port facilities, should remain an important work stream for the weeks to come as only from the coordinated EU-level perspective we can see the common interest beyond the narrow local ones.**

We have kept DG Grow informed on the situation and on practical issues required to continue supporting the society in this situation and will continue to do so. We remain at your disposal for any further support you may need in managing this crisis together with the national governments.

Yours sincerely,

  
Ignazio Capuano

  
Jori Ringman

**CC to:**

Mr. **Frans Timmermans**, Executive Vice-President of the European Commission  
Mr. **Valdis Dombrovskis**, Vice-President of the European Commission  
Mr. **Thierry Breton**, Commissioner Internal Market  
Mr. **Paolo Gentiloni**, Commissioner for the Economy  
Mr. **Gwen Cozigou**, Acting Director General, DG GROW  
Mr. **Peter Handley**, Head of Unit, DG GROW

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<sup>i</sup> Memorandum on identification of essential critical infrastructure workers during COVID-19 response, 19March, 2020

<sup>ii</sup> Misure urgenti di contenimento del contagion sull'intero territorio nazionale, 22 March, 2020

<sup>iii</sup> The New England Journal of Medicine: Aerosol and Surface Stability of SARS-CoV-2 as Compared with SARS-CoV-1, 17 March, 2020

<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMc2004973>