

A step in the right direction

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Fabio Gamba, Managing Director, Airline Catering Association

In Europe, the Brussels-based [Airline Catering Association](#) (ACA) is demanding the support of governing bodies to allow free movement. The continent was undoubtedly one of the hardest and earliest hit regions, reporting upwards of 236, 000 deaths and 6.5 million cases as of October 15, according to data retrieved from the [European Centre for Disease Prevention](#).

“Aviation has been one of the hardest hit sectors in Europe and in the world,” Fabio Gamba, Managing Director, ACA, tells *PAX International* in mid-October. “The hopes of seeing some forms of recovery in Europe or the US have partly waned because of largely uncoordinated policies that have made air travel much more cumbersome than necessary.”

In September, the ACA published the [Open Letter to Mrs. Ursula von der Leyen, President, European Commission](#) stating that it fully supports the Commission’s proposed EU [coordination framework for travel restrictions](#) for travelers from higher-risk areas. The framework outlines measures for Members States that support travel during the pandemic. The open letter was signed by the ACA, [Airport Council International](#), the [European Travel Commission](#) and the [International Air Transport Association](#) (IATA), among others.

“We thought that the EU coordination framework was long overdue, and we wanted to encourage

those still reluctant Member States to adopt and implement it,” Gamba says. “Of course, in itself it will not suffice to fully restore passenger confidence, but it is a step in the right direction. What we wholeheartedly support about the framework is first and foremost its request for coordination.”

The framework encourages the use of digital solutions to simplify processes related to passenger arrivals in Member States by aircraft, and Gamba says the ACA predicts a lot more digital data requirements will come into place for caterers.

“The digitalization of the industry is already well underway; the technology is quite mature in many aspects. Catering is no exception and it, too, is confronted with its own digitization agenda. I am just not sure how the pandemic will affect it.”

Part of the Association’s advocacy throughout the pandemic includes the release of the [summer travel guidelines on the safety of inflight food](#) and the system it calls the ‘4Ps’ in June. The 4Ps represent People, Premises, Policies, Processes & Procedures and Procurement in assessing risk. Gamba says the ACA has received positive feedback from the industry on these guidelines, particularly from small inflight caterers who are not receiving other guidance on how to ensure business continuity while faced with lower volumes. The Association is discussing a possible second edition with the [International Flight Services Association](#) (FSA) that could be released before the end of 2020.

“With the evolving of the situation we realize some additional aspects could be worth adding,” Gamba says. For example, the ACA is looking to help caterers adjust to new forms of auditing that airlines have established during the pandemic.

“Having flown myself during these last weeks, I witnessed how people felt so relieved when the flight crew came with snacks and drinks. It meant that they could take off their personal protective equipment, indulge themselves, break this boring routine of sitting for a few hours with a face mask on. Traveling can be so cumbersome. People will want to continue to count on these welcome interludes once they resume their travels. Airlines know it.”