

Briefing document

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EU policy on Food Waste

Background:

According to the FAO's estimates, about one-third of all food produced globally for human consumption is lost or wasted – around 1.3 billion tonnes per year. In the EU, it is estimated that around 100 million tonnes of food are wasted annually. If nothing is done, food waste in the EU could rise to over 120 million tonnes by 2020 (ie an annual loss of €200 billion) and this is clearly not sustainable. Causes of food waste vary. However, in medium or high income countries, such as Europe, they relate mainly to consumer behaviour. A recently published [EU survey](#) reveals that the majority of Europeans emphasizes individual responsibility when it comes to ways to reduce food waste with nearly two thirds saying that better shopping and meal planning would contribute to the reduction of waste. Europeans also highlight the important role of economic factors in the food supply chain, identifying the responsibility of shops and retailers, the hospitality and foodservice sectors as well as food manufacturers.

On December 2nd, the Commission adopted [plans to encourage the so-called circular economy](#) and this includes measures for tackling the food waste issue.

How does the Commission intend to tackle the food waste issue?

- Ensuring an accurate measurement of food waste at EU level:

The preliminary findings of the EU co-funded programme [FUSIONS](#) show that a number of EU member states do not measure food waste robustly (7 Member States do not have any data at all, others mostly have only partial data). This applies for all sectors but more acute for the primary production sector.

The Commission will create a platform involving Member States and stakeholders so as to facilitate the sharing of best practices and the evaluation of progress made over time.

- Considering opportunities to promote better understanding of date marking:

The [Eurobarometer study](#) confirms the need to pursue targeted information and educational initiatives on date marking, taking into account the level of

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understanding and information needs of different consumer groups in EU countries.

The Commission is expected to look at the possible extension of the list of products exempts, from the “best before” date but also to consider a possible modification of the terminology.

- Revisiting the definition of “waste”:

The idea is to ensure that leftover food can be distributed to charities or reused in feed production. The Commission already made it clear that the food waste prevention strategy cannot, in any circumstances whatsoever, jeopardise the safety of the food and feed chain. It will, therefore, be interesting to see how future initiatives in this area will be seeking to clarify and, wherever possible, lift any barriers which prevent the safe use and reuse of food in the food and feed chains.

What's next?

The Commission's legislative proposals now go to the European Parliament and the Council for further discussion.

Facts and figures:

- According to the FAO estimates, about one-third of all food produced globally for human consumption is lost or wasted – around 1.3 billion tonnes per year.
- Yearly Global food loss and waste is estimated at about 30% cereals, 40/50% root crops, fruits and vegetables, 20% of oil seeds meat and dairy products, 35% of fish.
- The value of food lost or wasted annually at global level is estimated at US\$ 1 trillion.
- In the EU, it is estimated that around 100 million tonnes of food are wasted annually and 45% of it is generated by households. If nothing is done, food waste could rise to over 120 million tonnes by 2020. EU annual losses resulting from food waste account for €200 billion.

Further Information:

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