



# Parliament calls for urgent measures to halve food wastage in the EU

Plenary sessions

**Up to 50% of edible and healthy food gets wasted in EU households, supermarkets, restaurants and along the food supply chain each year, while 79 million EU citizens live beneath the poverty line and 16 million depend on food aid from charitable institutions. Parliament called in a resolution adopted on Thursday for urgent measures to halve food waste by 2025 and to improve access to food for needy EU citizens.**

Since food is wasted at all stages - by producers, processors, retailers, caterers and consumers, MEPs call for a co-ordinated strategy, combining EU-wide and national measures, to improve the efficiency of food supply and consumption chains sector by sector and to tackle food wastage as a matter of urgency. If nothing is done, food wastage will grow 40% by 2020, says a study published by the Commission.

The most important problem in the future will be to tackle increased demand for food, as it will outstrip supply. We can no longer afford to stand idly by while perfectly edible food is being wasted. This is an ethical but also an economic and social problem, with huge implications for the environment, said rapporteur Salvatore Caronna (S&D, IT), prior to the vote. He also emphasized that "the ball is now in the Commission's court. We expect nothing less than a convincing EU strategy that will steer all 27 Member States to systematically tackle the issue."

## **Better education to avoid excessive waste**

To drastically reduce food wastage by 2025, new awareness campaigns should be run at both EU and national levels to inform the public how to avoid wasting food, says the resolution. Member States should introduce school and college courses explaining how to store, cook and dispose of food and also exchange best practices to this end. To promote the idea of using food sustainably, MEPs called for 2014 to be designated as "European year against food waste".

## **Proper labelling and packaging**

To avoid situations in which retailers offer food too close to its expiry date and thus increasing the potential for wastage, dual-date labelling could be introduced to show until when food may be sold (sell-by date) and until when it may be consumed (use-by date), says the resolution.

It adds that the European Commission and Member States should nonetheless first ensure that customers understand the difference between labels currently used within the EU, such as the quality-related "best before" and safety-related "use by" dates.

To enable consumers to buy just the amounts they need, food packaging should be offered in a range of sizes and designed to conserve food better. Foods close to their expiry dates and damaged food products should be sold at discounted prices, to make them more accessible to people in need, MEPs say.

## **Public institutions should favour responsible caterers**

# Press release

Public procurement rules for catering and hospitality should be updated to ensure that where possible, contracts are awarded to catering companies that use local produce and give away or redistribute leftover food to poorer people or food banks free of charge, rather than just disposing of it.

EU-level support measures such as distributing food to least-favoured citizens or programmes encouraging consumption of fruit and milk in schools should also be retargeted with a view to preventing food waste, adds the resolution.

MEPs also welcomed existing initiatives in some Member States to recover unsold food and offer it to needy citizens and called on retailers to take part in such programmes.

## **Food wastage figures**

Current wastage in EU27: 89 million tonnes per annum (i.e. 179 kg per capita)

Projection for 2020 (if no action is taken): 126 million tonnes (i.e. a 40% increase)

## ***Responsibility for food waste:***

- households: 42% (60% of which is avoidable)
- manufacturers: 39%
- retailers: 5%
- catering sector: 14%

*(Source: European Commission)*

*Procedure: Non-legislative resolution*

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