

## **P7\_TA(2012)0014**

### **Avoiding food wastage**

#### **European Parliament resolution of 19 January 2012 on how to avoid food wastage: strategies for a more efficient food chain in the EU (2011/2175(INI))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to Articles 191 and 192 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, relating to preserving, protecting and improving the quality of human health and the environment,
  - having regard to Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives<sup>1</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2010 on the Commission Green Paper on the management of bio-waste in the European Union<sup>2</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 7 September 2010 on fair revenues for farmers: a better-functioning food supply chain in Europe<sup>3</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 18 January 2011 on recognition of agriculture as a strategic sector in the context of food security<sup>4</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 23 June 2011 on the CAP towards 2020: meeting the food, natural resources and territorial challenges of the future<sup>5</sup>,
  - having regard to its resolution of 5 July 2011 on a more efficient and fairer retail market<sup>6</sup>,
  - having regard to the preparatory study on food waste across EU 27 – DG Environment, European Commission (2010),
  - having regard to the FAO study (2011) on global food losses and food waste,
  - having regard to Rule 48 of its Rules of Procedure,
  - having regard to the report of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development and the opinions of the Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (A7-0430/2011),
- A. whereas every year in Europe a growing amount of healthy, edible food – some estimates say up to 50% – is lost along the entire food supply chain, in some cases all the way up to the consumer, and becomes waste;

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 312, 23.11.2008, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> OJ C 351 E, 2.12.2011, p. 48.

<sup>3</sup> OJ C 308 E, 20.10.2011, p. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0006.

<sup>5</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0297 .

<sup>6</sup> Texts adopted, P7\_TA(2011)0307.

- B. whereas a study published by the Commission estimates annual food waste generation in the 27 Member States at approximately 89 million tonnes, or 179 kg per capita, varying considerably between individual countries and the various sectors, without even considering agricultural food waste or fish catches returned to the sea; whereas total food waste will have risen to approximately 126 million tonnes (a 40% increase) by 2020 unless additional preventive actions or measures are taken;
- C. whereas 79 million people are still living below the poverty line in the European Union – in other words, more than 15% of EU citizens earn less than 60% of average earnings in their country of residence; whereas, of these, 16 million have received food aid from charitable institutions;
- D. whereas the disturbing figures disclosed by the FAO, according to which 925 million people around the world are currently at risk of undernourishment, make the prospect of achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including halving poverty and hunger by 2015, even more remote;
- E. whereas, according to the FAO study, the anticipated rise in the world's population from 7 billion to 9 billion will necessitate at least a 70% increase in food supplies by 2050;
- F. whereas world grain production has risen from 824 million tonnes in 1960 to around 2,2 billion tonnes in 2010, 27 million tonnes being added to production every year; whereas, if global agro-production continues to follow this trend, the increase in grain production by 2050 compared with today's figures will be sufficient to feed the world's population; whereas, in the meantime, as post-harvest losses amount to about 14% of total production and another 15% is lost in distribution and in household waste, three-fifths of the total supply increase needed by 2050 could be achieved if we simply stopped wasting food;
- G. whereas reducing food waste is a significant preliminary step in combating hunger in the world, responding to the increase in demand predicted by the FAO and improving people's nutritional levels;
- H. whereas less food waste would mean more efficient land use, better water resource management, and positive repercussions for the whole agricultural sector worldwide, as well as boosting the fight against undernourishment in the developing world;
- I. whereas food waste has not just ethical, economic, social and nutritional but also health and environmental implications, since unconsumed food mountains make a major contribution to global warming and food waste produces methane, which as a greenhouse gas is 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide;
- J. whereas there is minimal wastage of food by consumers in developing countries; and whereas any food waste in those countries is mainly due to financial and technical limitations along the entire food production chain;
- K. whereas in Europe and North America, in the previous decades, when food production was abundant, food waste was not a policy priority, which led to an overall increase in food waste along the food supply chain; whereas in Europe and North America food waste occurs predominantly at the retail and consumption stage, as opposed to in the developing world, where production, harvest, processing and transport are the stages where losses are most common;

- L. whereas, according to recent studies, for every kilogram of food produced, 4,5 kg of CO<sub>2</sub> are released into the atmosphere; whereas in Europe the approximately 89 Mt of food wasted produce 170 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> eq./yr, broken down thus: food industry 59 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> eq./yr, domestic consumption 78 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> eq./yr, other 33 Mt CO<sub>2</sub> eq./yr; whereas the production of the 30% of food which ends up not being consumed accounts for an additional 50% of use of water resources for irrigation, while producing a kilogram of beef requires 5-10 tonnes of water;
- M. whereas the threat to food security is accompanied by mirror-image rich-world scourges such as obesity, cardiovascular illnesses and cancers arising from a diet overrich in fats and proteins, the result being that the world's overfed population numbers as many as the underfed and malnourished;
- N. whereas the recent fall in factors of production is in contradiction with the need to increase the food supply in the EU;
- O. whereas support given to developing countries to improve the efficiency of their food supply chains can not only directly benefit the local economies and sustainable growth in those countries but can also, indirectly, aid the global balance of trade in agricultural products and the redistribution of natural resources;
- P. whereas the exchange of good practices at European and international level, as well as assistance for developing countries, are of major importance in combating food waste worldwide;
- Q. whereas a growing number of Member States are embarking on awareness-raising initiatives to inform the public about the causes and effects of food waste, ways of reducing it and how to promote a scientific and civic culture guided by the principles of sustainability and solidarity;
- R. whereas food waste occurs across the entire food supply chain from the agricultural production stage, to the storage, processing, distribution, management and consumption stages;
- S. whereas the players in the food supply chain are chiefly responsible for food security and addressing avoidable food waste where possible;
- T. whereas some Member States ban food being sold at below cost price, robbing retailers of the opportunity to sell unsold fresh food at a cheaper price to consumers towards the end of the day and contributing further to waste in the food chain;
- U. whereas the recently adopted Regulation on Food Information to Consumers clarifies that foods with a 'use by' date should be considered unsafe after the expiry of that date;
- V. whereas the High Level Forum for a Better Functioning Food Supply Chain and the European Sustainable Consumption and Production Roundtable are working towards improving efficiency and sustainability along the food supply chain;
- 1. Believes food security to be a basic human right that is achieved through the availability, accessibility, use and temporal stability of healthy, sufficient, adequate and nutritious food; stresses that world food production is conditioned by a number of factors, including the

finite nature of natural resources vis-à-vis the rising global population and the limited access to food of the most vulnerable strata;

2. Calls on the Council, the Commission, the Member States and players in the food supply chain to address as a matter of urgency the problem of food waste along the entire supply and consumption chain and to devise guidelines for and support ways of improving the efficiency of the food supply chain sector by sector, and urges them to prioritise this within the European policy agenda; calls on the Commission, in this context, to raise awareness of the ongoing work in both the High Level Forum for a Better Functioning Food Supply Chain and the European Sustainable Consumption and Production Roundtable, including with regard to recommendations on how to tackle food waste;
3. Is concerned about the fact that a considerable amount of food is being discarded on a daily basis, despite being perfectly edible and that food waste gives rise to both environmental and ethical problems and economic and social costs, which pose internal market challenges for both business and consumers; calls on the Commission, therefore, to analyse the causes and effects of the disposal, wastage and landfilling annually in Europe of approximately 50% of the food produced and to ensure that this includes a detailed analysis of the waste as well as an assessment of the economic, environmental, nutritional and social impacts; asks the Commission, furthermore, to take practical measures towards halving food waste by 2025 and at the same time preventing the generation of bio-waste;
4. Points out that food waste has a number of causes: overproduction, faulty product targeting (unadapted size or shape), deterioration of the product or its packaging, marketing rules (problems of appearance or defective packaging), and inadequate stock management or marketing strategies;
5. Calls on the Commission to assess the impact of a policy of enforcement with regard to food waste; hopes that a waste treatment enforcement policy right along the food chain will be adopted by applying the 'polluter pays' principle;
6. Considers that, in order to reduce food waste as much as possible, it is necessary to involve all participants in the food supply chain and to target the various causes of waste sector by sector; calls on the Commission, therefore, to make an analysis of the whole food chain in order to identify in which food sectors food waste is occurring most, and which solutions can be used to prevent food waste;
7. Urges the Commission to cooperate with the FAO in setting common targets to reduce global food waste;
8. Notes that the issue of food waste should be addressed from the standpoint of resource efficiency and calls on the Commission to deliver specific initiatives targeting food waste under the Resource-Efficient Europe flagship initiative in order to ensure that this issue receives as much attention and is the subject of as much awareness raising as the issue of energy efficiency, since both are equally important for the environment and our future;
9. Calls on the Commission to create specific food waste prevention targets for Member States, as part of the waste prevention targets to be reached by Member States by 2014, as recommended by the 2008 Waste Framework Directive;
10. Considers it vital to reduce food waste along the entire food chain, from farm to fork;

stresses the need to adopt a coordinated strategy followed by practical action, including an exchange of best practice, at European and national level, in order to improve coordination between Member States with a view to avoiding food waste and in order to improve the efficiency of the food supply chain; believes that this could be achieved by promoting direct relations between producers and consumers and shortening the food supply chain, as well as by calling on all stakeholders to take greater shared responsibility and encouraging them to step up coordination in order to further improve logistics, transport, stock management and packaging;

11. Calls on the Commission, Member States and stakeholders to exchange best practices, combining knowledge from relevant forums and platforms such as the EU Retail Forum on Sustainability, the European Food Sustainable Consumption and Production Roundtable, the High Level Forum for a Better Functioning Food Supply Chain, the Informal Member States Network 'Friends of Sustainable Food', the Consumer Goods Forum, etc;
12. Calls on the Commission, when drawing up development policies, to support measures aimed at reducing waste along the entire food supply chain in developing countries where production methods, post-harvest management, processing and packaging infrastructure and processes are problematic and inadequate; suggests encouraging the modernisation of this agricultural equipment and infrastructure in order to reduce post-harvest losses and extend the shelf-life of food; believes, further, that improving the efficiency of the food supply chain can help the countries concerned achieve food self-sufficiency;
13. Calls for the retargeting of support measures at EU level regarding the distribution of food products to the Union's least-favoured citizens, Community aid for the supply of milk and dairy products to schoolchildren, and the programme for encouraging the consumption of fruit in schools, with a view to preventing food waste;
14. Notes that there is confusion around the definition of the expressions 'food waste' and 'bio-waste'; believes that 'food waste' is generally understood to mean all the foodstuffs discarded from the food supply chain for economic or aesthetic reasons or owing to the nearness of the 'use by' date, but which are still perfectly edible and fit for human consumption and, in the absence of any alternative use, are ultimately eliminated and disposed of, generating negative externalities from an environmental point of view, economic costs and a loss of revenue for businesses;
15. Notes that there is no harmonised definition of food waste in Europe; calls on the Commission, therefore, to put forward a legislative proposal defining the typology of 'food waste' and in this context also to establish a separate definition of food residuals for biofuels or biowaste, which are separate from ordinary food waste since they are reutilised for energy purposes;
16. Believes that all Member States should make it possible for retailers to substantially reduce the price of fresh food to below the cost of production when it is close to its sell-before date, in order to reduce the amount of unsold food discarded and to offer a possibility for consumers with a lower disposable income to buy high-quality food at cheaper prices;
17. Wishes to point out that agriculture, by its very nature, is resource-efficient and can play a fundamental and pioneering role in combating food waste; urges the Commission, therefore, to include ambitious measures to this effect in its next legislative proposals on agriculture, trade and distribution of foodstuffs; hopes for joint action by way of investment in research,

science, technology, education, advice and innovation in agriculture with a view to reducing food waste and educating and encouraging consumers to behave more responsibly and deliberately to prevent food waste;

18. Is of the opinion that quality requirements regarding appearance, whether imposed by European or national legislation or by internal company rules, which stipulate the size and shape of fresh fruit and vegetables in particular, are at the basis of many unnecessary discards, which increase the amount of food wasted; asks stakeholders to recognise and explain the nutritional value of agricultural products of imperfect size/shape in order to reduce discards;
19. Calls on the Commission to develop guidance on the implementation of Article 5 of the Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC), which defines by-products, given that the lack of legal clarity under EU legislation regarding the distinction between waste and non-waste could hinder the efficient use of by-products;
20. Calls on the Commission, the Member States, processors and retailers to develop guidelines to address avoidable food waste and to implement greater resource efficiency in their section of the food supply chain, to continuously work to improve processing, packaging and transporting so as to cut down on unnecessary food waste;
21. Urges the Commission and the Member States to encourage the exchange of best practice and promote awareness-raising campaigns to inform the public of the value of food and agricultural produce, the causes and effects of food waste and ways of reducing it, thereby fostering a scientific and civic culture guided by the principles of sustainability and solidarity; calls Member States to encourage the introduction of food education courses, at all levels of education, including colleges, explaining for example how to store, cook and dispose the food, thereby encouraging better behaviours; stresses the important role played by local authorities and municipal enterprises, in addition to retailers and the media, in providing information and support to citizens on preventing and reducing food waste;
22. Welcomes the initiatives already taken in various Member States aimed at recovering, locally, unsold and discarded products throughout the food supply chain in order to redistribute them to groups of citizens below the minimum income threshold who lack purchasing power; stresses the importance of the exchange of best practices in this connection between Member States, as also of initiatives at local level; points out in this regard the valuable contribution made, on the one hand, by volunteers in sorting and distributing such products and, on the other, by professional companies that are developing anti-waste systems and measures;
23. Calls on retailers to engage with food redistribution programmes for citizens who lack purchasing power and to implement measures allowing for products nearing expiry to be discounted;
24. Welcomes the work of companies and professional partnerships in the public, private, academic and community sectors in devising and implementing, at European level, coordinated action programmes to combat food waste;
25. Considers that investing in methods leading to a reduction in food waste could result in a reduction in the losses incurred by agri-food businesses and, consequently, in a lowering of food prices, thus potentially also improving the access to food by poorer segments of the

population; calls on the Commission to determine ways and means of better involving agri-food businesses, wholesale markets, shops, distribution chains, public and private caterers, restaurants, public administrations and NGOs in anti-waste practices; encourages for this purpose the use of the internet and new technologies; notes, in this context, the importance of setting up a Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) for food focussed inter alia on preventing food wastage; calls on the Commission to ask the agri-food sector and stakeholders to assume their share of the responsibility for the food waste problem, in particular by providing a variety of portion sizes and thus to assess the benefits of offering more bulk food products and to take better account of single-person households in order to reduce food waste and thereby consumers' carbon footprint;

26. Calls on the Member States to create economic incentives for limiting food waste;
27. Stresses that the GHG emissions associated with the production, packaging and transportation of food that is thrown away are needless additional emissions; notes that improving the efficiency of the food supply chain, so as to prevent food waste and eliminate edible food waste, is a key step towards climate change mitigation;
28. Calls on the Commission to consider possible amendments to the public procurement rules on catering and hospitality services so that, all other conditions being equal, when contracts are awarded, priority is given to undertakings that guarantee that they will redistribute free of charge any unallocated (unsold) items to groups of citizens who lack purchasing power, and that promote specific activities to reduce waste upstream, such as giving preference to agricultural and food products produced as near as possible to the place of consumption;
29. Calls on the Commission to set an example by addressing food waste within the EU institutions, and to take the necessary measures as a matter of urgency to reduce the particularly large quantity of food discarded every day in the canteens of the various EU institutions;
30. Calls on the Commission to assess and encourage measures to reduce food waste upstream, such as dual-date labelling ('sell by' and 'use by'), and the discounted sale of foods close to their expiry date and of damaged goods; notes that the optimisation and efficient use of food packaging can play an important role in preventing food waste by reducing a product's overall environmental impact, not least by means of industrial eco-design, which includes measures such as varying pack sizes to help consumers buy the right amount and discourage excessive consumption of resources, providing advice on how to store and use products, and designing packaging in such a way as to increase the longevity of goods and maintain their freshness, always ensuring that appropriate materials which are not prejudicial to health or to the durability of products are used for food packaging and preservation;
31. Calls on the Commission, in cooperation with the Member States, to issue recommendations regarding refrigeration temperatures, based on evidence that non-optimal and improper temperature leads to food becoming prematurely inedible and causes unnecessary waste; underlines the fact that harmonised levels of temperature throughout the supply chain would improve product conservation and reduce food waste for products transported and sold cross-border;
32. Recalls the results of the survey conducted by the Commission (Consumer Empowerment in the EU – SEC(2011)0469), according to which 18 % of European citizens do not understand the 'best before' label; asks the Commission and the Member States, therefore,

to clarify the meaning of the date labels ('best before', 'expiry date' and 'use by') in order to reduce consumers' uncertainty regarding food edibility and to disseminate accurate information to the public, notably the understanding that the minimum durability 'best before' date is related to quality, while the 'use by' date is related to safety, in order to help consumers make informed choices; urges the Commission to publish a user-friendly manual on the use of food close to expiry dates, while ensuring food safety in donation and animal feed, and building on best practices by stakeholders in the food supply chain, in order, for instance, to match supply and demand more quickly and effectively;

33. Calls on the Member States to encourage and support initiatives geared to stimulating sustainable small- and medium-scale production that is linked to local and regional markets and consumption; acknowledges that local markets are environmentally sustainable and contribute to the stability of the primary sector; asks that the common agricultural policy earmark, in the future, the necessary funding to promote stability in the primary sector, for example by means of direct sales, local markets and all measures to promote low or zero food miles;
34. Calls on the Member States to ensure that small local producers and local producer groups can take part in public procurement procedures for the implementation of specific programmes promoting, in particular, the consumption of fruit and dairy products in schools;
35. Urges the Council and the Commission to designate 2014 the European Year against Food Waste, as a key information and awareness-raising initiative for European citizens and to focus national governments' attention on this important topic, with a view to allocating sufficient funds to tackle the challenges of the near future;
36. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and Commission.