

Food waste: the problem in the EU in numbers [infographic]

[15-05-2017 - 14:47]

Some 88 million tonnes of food are wasted in the EU every year, equivalent to 173 kilos per person. Not only is this a waste of resources, it also contributes to climate change. Parliament is working on new measures to cut food waste in the EU by 50%. Check out our infographic to find out which sectors and countries waste the most food and read what is being done at EU level and what you can do yourself.

Food is lost and wasted along the whole supply chain from farms to processing and manufacturing to shops, restaurants and at home. However most of the food in the EU is wasted by households with 53% and processing with 19%.

Consumers are often unaware of the issue or its causes. According to a [Eurobarometer](#) survey, date markings on food products is poorly understood, even though nearly six out of 10 Europeans say they always check “best before” and “use by” labels.

Why food waste is a problem

Food waste does not only mean that valuable and often scarce resources such as water, soil, and energy are being lost, it also contributes to climate change. According to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), food waste has a global carbon footprint of about 8% of all global greenhouse gas emissions caused by humans. For every kilo of food produced, 4.5 kilos of CO₂ are released into the atmosphere.

There is also the ethical aspect: FAO says about 793 million people in the world are malnourished. According to Eurostat, 55 million people (9.6% of the EU's population), were unable to afford a quality meal every second day in 2014,.

What Parliament is doing

On 16 May, MEPs adopted a report by Croatian S&D member [Biljana Borzan](#), which proposes a set of measures to reduce food waste in the EU by 30% by 2025 and by 50% by 2030 compared to the 2014 baseline. This objective was already set out in the [waste legislation package](#) adopted in March.

“The European Union, as one of the richest and most prosperous communities in the world, has a moral and political obligation to reduce huge quantities of food wasted every year,” said Borzan before the committee vote in April.

The report also includes several proposals to reduce food waste such as facilitating food donations. The report calls on the European Commission to propose a change in the current VAT directive to explicitly authorise tax exemptions for food donations. Donations reduce food waste while helping people in need at the same time.

In addition the report lists solutions to end the confusion about “best before” and “use by” labelling on food products.

Six things you could do to minimise food waste

- Compile shopping lists
- Check the dates and be aware of the meaning of date labelling
- Store food in accordance with the instructions on the packaging
- Put new food at the back of your fridge and cupboards
- Use up leftovers
- Freeze

Find out more

- Press release on MEPs adopting the report (16 May 2017): <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/cs/news-room/20170509IPR73930/cutting-food-waste>
- Procedure file: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2016/2223\(INI\)&I=en](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2016/2223(INI)&I=en)
- Briefing: tackling foodwaste: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/thinktank/en/document.html?reference=EPRS_BRI%282016%29593563
- European Commission page on food waste: http://ec.europa.eu/food/safety/food_waste_en