



2016/2223(INI)

27.3.2017

OPINION

of the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

for the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety

on initiative on resource efficiency: reducing food waste, improving food safety

(2016/2223(INI))

Rapporteur: James Nicholson

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development calls on the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

1. Notes that food waste is caused by a range of factors and is a problem at every stage of the chain, with the same responsibility to take action at each stage, whether it is production, processing, marketing, transport or consumption; insists therefore on the need to improve communication between all actors in the food supply chain, in particular between suppliers and distributors, in order to match supply and demand;
2. Calls on all stakeholders in the food production, supply and consumption chains to use various best practices and exchange information and experience related to effective measures from the EU Member States to combat food losses and prevent food waste at different stages of the food production, supply and consumption chains, and calls on the Commission to propose guidelines based on proven data and best practice;
3. Emphasises that farmers' livelihoods depend on getting produce to the market under fair conditions and at remunerative prices and that loss of produce at farm level, including produce lost due to extreme or unusual climate events, damaged in a natural disaster or destroyed because a market has been lost or prices are low, amounts to a loss of investment and income for farmers; points out, in this connection, that price volatility on agricultural markets affects production and farmers' incomes and can result in food going to waste, and that appropriate tools to address price volatility therefore need to be built into the CAP;
4. Emphasises that the Commission and the Member States should first and foremost consult with all key stakeholders – including the agricultural sector – and carry out an impact assessment on any proposed measures to be implemented to prevent food waste throughout the Union;
5. Stresses that food waste must be analysed in a cross-cutting manner, as it affects several policies at the same time, including agriculture, fisheries, food safety, the environment, social affairs and tax policy; insists therefore on the need to better harmonise the different policies and ensure, where applicable, that the reduction of food waste is a priority of existing policies, and stresses that the fight against food wastage should not compromise food safety and environmental standards, nor animal protection standards, notably animal health and welfare;
6. Highlights the findings of the Special Report of the European Court of Auditors 'Combating food waste: an opportunity for the EU to improve the use of resources in the food chain', which underlines that the Commission's action regarding food waste has so far been sporadic and fragmented, while pointing out loopholes such as delaying the Member States' obligation to report on their food waste and postponing its deadline to adopt an implementing act laying down a common methodology for the evaluation of the food quantities;
7. Stresses that the Commission has not yet conducted a study to determine the impact of the different reforms on the volume of agricultural production and its effect on food waste,

and calls therefore on the Commission to integrate the issue of food waste into its future policy development and implementation of the CAP;

8. Calls on the Commission to draw a clear distinction in its future policies between food wastage, which is caused by consumer behaviour and can be minimised by appropriate initiatives and awareness-raising campaigns, and food loss, which is unavoidable at primary production level owing to force majeure events such as storms;
9. Welcomes the recent establishment of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste to allow stakeholders to share information in relation to optimisation of use of former foodstuffs and by-products from the food chain in feed production and its importance for primary production; calls on the Commission to supply Parliament with a detailed schedule of the measures under way and the objectives set, as well as a progress report on the work on a common methodology and on donations, and calls on the Commission to have the proceedings of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste made available in the 24 EU languages;
10. Highlights the initiatives contained in the Circular Economy Action Plan covering measures for establishing a financial support platform to attract investment and innovations aimed at reducing losses, as well the guidelines addressed to the Member States for converting some food losses or agricultural by-products into energy;
11. Stresses that energy needs should be met by using waste and by-products that are not useful in any other process higher up the waste hierarchy;
12. Calls on the Commission to recognise the role played by public agencies providing services of general interest in waste management and in efforts to combat food waste and the efforts of undertakings such as SMEs that make a direct contribution to the circular economy;
13. Stresses that food wastage has huge environmental consequences, contributes to climate change and represents a waste of limited resources such as land, energy and water;
14. Notes the potential for optimisation of use of food unavoidably lost or discarded and by-products from the food chain, in particular those of animal origin, in feed production, nutrient recycling and production of soil improvers and their importance for primary production;
15. Calls on the Commission to analyse legal barriers to the use of former foodstuffs in feed production and to promote research in this area, while at the same time stressing the need for increased traceability, compliance with biosecurity standards and using separation and treatment processes that bring food safety risk down to zero;
16. Calls for the establishment in EU legislation of a comprehensive food waste hierarchy with a clear focus on source prevention; stresses that prevention at source is the top priority in the waste hierarchy for food waste; notes that thereafter comes use for the human diet, and only then feedstuffs for animals, then composting and anaerobic decomposition, i.e.:
 - a) source prevention;

- b) edible food rescue, prioritising human use over animal feed and the reprocessing into non-food products;
 - c) organic recycling;
 - d) energy recovery;
 - e) disposal;
17. Notes the potential for optimisation of use of former foodstuffs and by-products from the food chain in feed production and its importance for primary production, but stresses the use of waste hierarchy and the need for increased traceability;
 18. Stresses the importance of bringing together farmers in cooperatives or professional associations in order to reduce food losses by strengthening their knowledge of markets, allowing more efficient programming, economies of scale and improving their capacity to market their production;
 19. Highlights the importance of cooperation, for example via producer organisations or other bodies such as inter-branch organisations and cooperatives, for increased access to finance for innovation and investment in treatment technologies such as composting and anaerobic digestion, where appropriate, or further processing of products which could allow farmers to access new products, markets and customers; points out, in this connection, that sectoral organisation and the use of contracts result in better production management and more effective action against food wastage; believes that it is essential that this is done at local or regional level to respect the proximity principle;
 20. Notes the benefits of cooperation and digitalisation, which allows better access to data and demand forecasts, and developing advance production programmes for farmers, enabling them to tailor their production to demand, better coordinate with the other sectors of the food supply chain, and minimise wastage; given the challenging nature of reducing unavoidable food waste, stresses that effective use of food waste, including in the bio economy, should be promoted;
 21. Takes the view that in order to better match product supply to demand, labelling rules that provide appropriate information on the origin of the ingredients and the production and processing techniques used would enable consumers to make more informed purchases, thereby having an indirect influence also on production factors, which would have a positive impact in environmental, economic and social terms;
 22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to provide additional incentives for the prevention of food waste;
 23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to better inform farmers and consumers about more efficient management of energy, water and natural resources throughout the food chain, so as to significantly reduce waste of resources and food, with the aim of reducing input costs and nutrient wastage and increasing innovation and sustainability within farming systems;
 24. Considers that increased research and information is needed to avoid food waste in

primary production and to replace resource-wasting practices in agricultural production, food processing or distribution, with environmentally friendly methods;

25. Stresses that, in order to keep food waste to an absolute minimum, farmers should be put in a position, both technically and economically, to use their products in the most resource efficient way;
26. Considers that increased cooperation among producers and utilisation of producer organisations is needed in order to enable and promote access to secondary market opportunities, other outlets and alternative uses for food surpluses, which would otherwise be ploughed back into the soil or wasted, giving priority to re-use for the purpose of human consumption, such as selling at lower grade for processed foods and selling at local markets;
27. Notes that those products that can still be used for non-food purposes, such as conversion into feed, fertilisation of fields or use for the production of compost and energy, should be clearly distinguished from those considered to be waste, in order not to jeopardise their re-use;
28. Notes the contamination risk involved from plastic and metal in food waste inputs to compost and soil, and onwards to freshwater and marine ecosystems, and urges that this pollution route be minimised; recalls, in addition, the intention of the directive on the use of sewage sludge in agriculture to minimise contamination in agricultural soils; calls therefore for caution when considering mixing of waste streams and for appropriate safeguards;
29. Highlights that the FUSIONS project noted that there are few measurements of food losses in primary production activities such as agriculture, horticulture, aquaculture or fisheries and that this may prevent an accurate assessment of the overall scale of food waste in Europe;
30. Notes the difficulty in quantifying food wastage and food loss at the primary production stage due to the heterogeneous products and respective processes and the lack of a clear definition of food waste; calls on the Commission to identify and disseminate to Member States best practice in relation to gathering data on food loss and food waste on farms without placing an additional administrative or cost burden on farmers; calls on the Commission to swiftly adopt a common terminology and definition of food waste, taking into account the distinction of food wastage and food loss in the primary production sector;
31. Believes that farmer- and community-led initiatives can offer sustainable, economically viable solutions and provide value for products which might otherwise go to waste, by developing markets for products that would normally be excluded from the food chain, and highlights the potential of farmer- and community-led social innovation projects such as gleaning and donation of excess foodstuffs to food aid associations, including food banks; calls on the Commission and the Member States to recognise practices of this kind and to promote them under the second CAP pillar;
32. Stresses that, in order to reduce wastage at the production stage, innovative techniques and technologies should be used to optimise performance in the fields and convert those

products that do not meet market standards into processed goods;

33. Calls for the restoration of an effective policy to regulate agricultural markets in order to better match supply to demand and thus reduce food waste;
34. Notes that some wastage and loss at farm level results not just from the product specifications imposed on suppliers but also from other restrictive practices such as the cancellation of orders in response to changes in consumer demand, over-production as a result of requirements to meet seasonal demands and the use of staple food items as ‘loss leaders’ to increase market share; stresses the need to revise marketing standards for quality and aesthetics for classifying agricultural products;
35. Considers that increased research and information is needed on use-by dates, geared to each product, along with action to promote and boost consumption of fresh and loose produce, and to reduce long-term packaging and storage;
36. Stresses the importance of tailoring distribution, conservation and packaging procedures closely to the features of each product and to consumer needs, in order to limit product wastage;
37. Notes that marketing standards can contribute to food waste and asks the Commission to promote research on the relationship between marketing standards and food waste; calls on the Commission and the Member States to work together to influence the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) public standards with the aim of avoiding the waste of resources by preventing the generation of food waste;
38. Notes that unfair trade practices and price dumping in the food sector result in food often being sold at below its real value, thus contributing to more wastage, and that a ban on selling at below the production price is urgently needed, partly in order to raise consumers’ awareness of the true value of food;
39. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to coordinate their efforts as quickly as possible and put forward a framework for a Europe-wide solution to the problem of unfair trading practices in the food supply chain, proceeding from the recommendations set out in Parliament’s resolution of 7 June 2016¹; believes that resolving this problem will improve the position of farmers, the weakest links in the chain, and, by lowering overproduction and the accumulation of surpluses, could help not only to stabilise prices and provide farmers with fair and remunerative farm-gate prices, but also to reduce both food wastage along the entire chain and losses generated on family farms; points out that fairer pay to producers would increase the value of the products, resulting in a reduction of food wastage in the final links of the supply chain;
40. Emphasises the importance of educational and awareness-raising initiatives and measures, especially for the household sector, and calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage exchanges of best practices and to promote public awareness campaigns on the value of foodstuffs and agricultural produce, the causes and consequences of food wastage and on the ways of reducing it, whilst promoting the principles of sustainability

¹ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2016)0247.

and solidarity;

41. Calls on the Member States to encourage the introduction of food education courses at all educational levels, and underlines the important role of local authorities and municipal enterprises, alongside that of retailers and the media, in providing information and assistance to citizens on how best to keep and/or use food in order to prevent and reduce food waste;
42. Draws attention to the important role the School Fruit, Vegetable and Milk Scheme plays in raising public awareness and in particular the introduction of compulsory accompanying measures, such as the promotion of conscious food consumption in education, and stresses the importance of using these measures to convey educational messages about food waste and its prevention;
43. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to continue supporting projects and promotion-oriented educational campaigns that teach children from an early age to consume fresh, wholesome, locally produced food;
44. Encourages the Member States and the Commission to promote local and organic food and to support short food-supply chains and in-home selling of agricultural products;
45. Stresses that local and regional products, as well as community-supported agriculture schemes, enable shorter supply chains, which increase the quality standards of products and support seasonal demands, thus having considerable social, environmental and economic benefits;
46. Believes that short supply chains can play a vital role in reducing food waste and over-packaging, reducing food miles and providing higher quality food and transparent food chains, and, in doing so, underpin the economic viability of rural communities;
47. Takes the view that the greatest barrier in the EU to the delivery of still edible surplus food to those in need is the shortage, or sometimes complete lack of, capacity in the distribution channels; notes that charitable organisations and state- or local government-run social work bodies do not have enough material or human resources to transport and distribute the still edible food offered for charitable purposes; notes that this is true in particular for the most disadvantaged regions;
48. Points out that the EU provides funding to facilitate the donation of food, including under the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD), which is used, inter alia, to finance storage and transport facilities for food aid organisations; takes the view that Member States do not make sufficient use of the opportunities on offer in this area; recommends, in the light of the above, that, when implementing FEAD, resources available under the programme be reallocated for the delivery of surplus food; notes that by reallocating resources – according to a previous model drawn up by European charitable organisations – the value of the food delivered to the most in need could be increased 14 times as compared with the current utilisation of the FEAD programme;
49. Notes that the food industry has already taken initiatives to reduce food waste by strengthening cooperation with food aid associations, including food banks throughout Europe;

50. Calls on the Member States to consider institutional and financial means of support for ‘social shops and supermarkets’;
51. Calls for increased engagement by all stakeholders to make sure that any food that is about to expire is first donated to charity; notes, however, that there are still barriers to donations, mainly of a legal nature; calls on the Commission to clarify the interpretation of the legal provisions discouraging donations;
52. Stresses that the use of stocks and food that would otherwise be wasted does not preclude the need for good supply management and wise management of the food chain to avoid systematic structural surpluses;
53. Calls on the Commission and the Member States, without placing an unnecessary burden on SMEs and voluntary organisations, to closely monitor food donations in order to make sure that the food is not siphoned off and sold on alternative markets, as this would prevent it from reaching those in need and discourage people in the trade from making donations, on account of the risk of this resulting in unfair competition;
54. Calls on the Commission to clarify the rules on the application of the VAT Directive in the case of food aid and bring forward an amendment to the VAT Directive that would explicitly authorise tax exemptions on food donations; calls on the Member States to follow the recommendations made by the Commission and set VAT at a lower or close-to-zero rate for donations made close to the ‘best before’ date or where food is unsaleable;
55. Emphasises that food wastage at the production stage can also stem from the deterioration of our agricultural production base resulting from the degradation of land, biodiversity (reduced pollination) and natural resources of all kinds, and that due account needs to be taken of this in the future development of farming and the CAP;
56. Notes the importance of access to plant protection products for farmers to ensure that crop quality is maintained and harvests are not lost due to adverse weather conditions, pests and diseases;
57. Believes it important to ensure that land is properly managed under the CAP and national policies in order to contain food losses caused indirectly by poorly managed urbanisation and infrastructure development or the abandonment of farmland that has become economically unattractive to farm;
58. Notes the UN Sustainable Development Goals target to reduce food waste by 2030;
59. Reiterates the importance of the ‘water footprint’ concept for food and feed;
60. Points out that Regulation (EC) 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council includes among foods even water ‘intentionally incorporated into the food during its manufacture, preparation or treatment’ and that water is a key strategic resource for the entire agri-food industry;
61. Stresses that food wastage, depending on the quality, type and quantity of water used for food production, also involves a substantial waste of water;

62. Points to the importance of improving water management in agriculture, developing 'water-smart' food production systems and increasing water and food safety and security in areas that are most at risk because of climate change;
63. Notes that the amount of rejected crops could be reduced if they were sold closer to consumers, for example in farmers' markets and farm shops, where marketing circuits are short and the products purchased are local products with little processing;
64. Calls on the EU Commission and Member States to launch a campaign to raise awareness among the EU citizens on the serious economic, social and environmental implications of food wastage;
65. Points out that 'buy one, get one free' marketing strategies increase the risk of consumers buying more than they need, thus increasing the risk of foodstuffs that are not close to the 'use by' date going to waste; welcomes the fact that some retailers discount products coming up to the 'use by' date, and believes that this should become the general practice.

INFORMATION ON ADOPTION IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

Date adopted	21.3.2017
Result of final vote	+: 36 -: 1 0: 4
Members present for the final vote	John Stuart Agnew, Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Eric Andrieu, José Bové, Daniel Buda, Michel Dantin, Jean-Paul Denanot, Albert Deß, Diane Dodds, Herbert Dorfmann, Norbert Erdős, Luke Ming Flanagan, Martin Häusling, Esther Herranz García, Jan Huitema, Peter Jahr, Ivan Jakovčić, Elisabeth Köstinger, Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Philippe Loiseau, Mairead McGuinness, Nuno Melo, Ulrike Müller, James Nicholson, Maria Noichl, Marijana Petir, Laurențiu Rebege, Jens Rohde, Maria Lidia Senra Rodríguez, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Czesław Adam Siekierski, Tibor Szanyi, Marco Zullo
Substitutes present for the final vote	Paul Brannen, Angélique Delahaye, Maria Heubuch, Karin Kadenbach, Anthea McIntyre, Massimo Paolucci, John Procter, Estefanía Torres Martínez, Vladimir Urutchev

FINAL VOTE BY ROLL CALL IN COMMITTEE ASKED FOR OPINION

36	+
ALDE	Jan Huitema, Ivan Jakovčić, Ulrike Müller, Jens Rohde
ECR	Zbigniew Kuźmiuk, Anthea McIntyre, James Nicholson, John Procter
ENF	Philippe Loiseau, Laurențiu Rebeca
GUE/NGL	Luke Ming Flanagan, María Lidia Senra Rodríguez, Estefanía Torres Martínez
NI	Diane Dodds
PPE	Daniel Buda, Michel Dantin, Angélique Delahaye, Albert Deß, Herbert Dorfmann, Norbert Erdős, Esther Herranz García, Peter Jahr, Elisabeth Köstinger, Mairead McGuinness, Nuno Melo, Marijana Petir, Czesław Adam Siekierski
S&D	Clara Eugenia Aguilera García, Eric Andrieu, Paul Brannen, Jean-Paul Denanot, Karin Kadenbach, Maria Noichl, Massimo Paolucci, Ricardo Serrão Santos, Tibor Szanyi

1	-
EFDD	John Stuart Agnew

4	0
EFDD	Marco Zullo
Vers/ALE	José Bové, Maria Heubuch, Martin Häusling

Key to symbols:

+ : in favour

- : against

0 : abstention