

Question for written answer E-003731/2013
to the Council
Rule 117
Dominique Vlasto (PPE)

Subject: Combating the problem of food wastage - use-by dates

The problem of food wastage is growing worse every year, even as basic resources are becoming increasingly scarce and malnutrition is spreading in Europe. Eighty-nine million tonnes of food are thrown away each year (179 kg/year/person), even though most of it is perfectly safe to eat.

At a time when millions of people are dependent on food donations, surely we must think carefully about the causes of food wastage in an effort to reverse this trend and help those most in need.

Excessively strict laws on use-by dates are often cited as one such cause.

Under these laws, supermarkets are not permitted to sell products once their use-by dates have passed. The level of bacteriological risk depends on the type of food involved, however. Eating mass-produced yoghurts a few days after their use-by dates poses no risk to health, as proper hygiene is maintained throughout the production process. Eating tainted meat, on the other hand, may well be dangerous.

Banning the donation of food products that cannot be sold but are safe to eat is regarded by the public as a huge waste.

Given that the Commission is planning to publish a new communication on food wastage in 2013, would the Council support revised EU legislation on use-by dates in order to clear the way for the donation of food products which, though past their use-by dates, present no risk to health?