

Reducing food waste in the European Union

SUMMARY

According to a 2019 report by the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), we know surprisingly little about how much food is lost or wasted, where along the food supply chain this happens, and why. Producing food that is not eaten – whether because it is lost in the field or wasted on a plate – not only diminishes the quantity of food available, but is also a waste of economic and environmental resources, FAO states.

Around 88 million tonnes of food waste are generated annually in the EU alone, with associated costs estimated at €143 billion. To address this issue, an EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste was established in 2016. The forum brings together key players seeking to provide help to all those involved in: defining measures to prevent food waste, including at EU level; sharing best practices; and evaluating progress made over time.

The European Parliament has consistently backed the reduction of food waste. In its resolution of January 2020 on the European Green Deal, the EP calls for an enforceable EU-wide food waste reduction target of 50 % by 2030, based on a common methodology for measuring food waste. Member States are expected to have started collecting data on food waste in 2020 and to report on national food waste levels by mid-2022.

As part of the European Green Deal action plan, the European Commission presented in May 2020 a 'Farm to Fork strategy' aimed at making food systems more sustainable. One of the targets included in the strategy is 'stepping up the fight against food waste', that is, cutting food waste by half with the help of legally binding EU-wide targets by 2023. In this context, the Commission also aims to revise EU rules on date marking in order to take account of consumer research indicating that the meaning of date marking on food products is often misinterpreted or misunderstood.



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Introduction

The United Nations' target 12.3 under sustainable development goal (SDG) 12 on sustainable consumption and production calls for halving per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reducing food loss along the production and supply chains by 2030. The EU is [committed](#) to meeting this target.

Producing food that is not eaten – whether because it is lost in the field or wasted on a plate – not only diminishes the quantity of food available, but is also a waste of economic and environmental resources, states a UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) 2019 [report](#). According to the report, about 30 % of the world's agricultural land is used to produce food that is later lost or wasted.

This issue has an ethical aspect too, given that there were 690 million hungry people in the world in 2019. According to recent FAO [projections](#), the coronavirus pandemic may add another 132 million people to this number in 2020 alone, highlighting the challenge that the pandemic poses to the eradication of hunger by 2030. Furthermore, growing population and rising incomes are forecast to boost demand for agricultural products by 35-50 % between 2012 and 2050, putting even more pressure on the world's natural resources, FAO warns.

In the European Union, the latest Eurostat data (2018) [indicate](#) that 33 million people (7.4 % of the whole EU population) cannot afford a quality meal (including meat, chicken, fish or a vegetarian equivalent) every second day. This figure varied from 31.7 % of the population in Bulgaria to less than 2 % of the population in Ireland, Sweden and the Netherlands.

According to FAO, reducing food loss and waste can contribute to feeding the world population in an environmentally sustainable manner, as it helps to improve resource-use efficiency and decrease the amount of greenhouse gases (GHGs) emitted per unit of food consumed. FAO notes that three major types of environmental footprints of food loss and waste can be quantified: GHG emissions (carbon footprint), pressure on land (land footprint) and pressure on water resources (water footprint). To reach environmental objectives by means of reducing food loss and waste, an understanding is required of where in the food supply chain the loss or waste happens; which commodities are involved; and which environmental footprints are affected. Thus, according to FAO, choosing which environmental footprint to target is the first consideration to make. For example, when the goal is to target GHG emissions¹ that accumulate throughout the entire food supply chain, waste reduction interventions will be most effective at the consumption and the retail stages, where products incorporate all GHG emissions of the previous stages. The reduction of food loss and waste can be seen as a way to improve the environmental sustainability of the global food system: it has a role to play as part of a broader package of interventions towards environmental sustainability, together with, for example, dietary change and technological improvements.

Estimates and recent research

According to the above-mentioned FAO report, it is surprising how little is really known about how much food is lost or wasted, and where and why this happens. A broad estimate prepared for FAO in 2011 suggested that around a third of the world's food was lost or wasted every year. This estimate, while still widely cited due to a lack of information in this field, can only be considered as very rough. The 2019 report points out that there is wide variation in the percentages of food loss and waste for the same commodities and the same stages in the supply chain, both within and across countries. This indicates that it is not possible to generalise about the occurrence of food loss and waste across food supply chains but, on the contrary, it is necessary to identify critical loss points in specific supply chains to be able to take appropriate countermeasures.

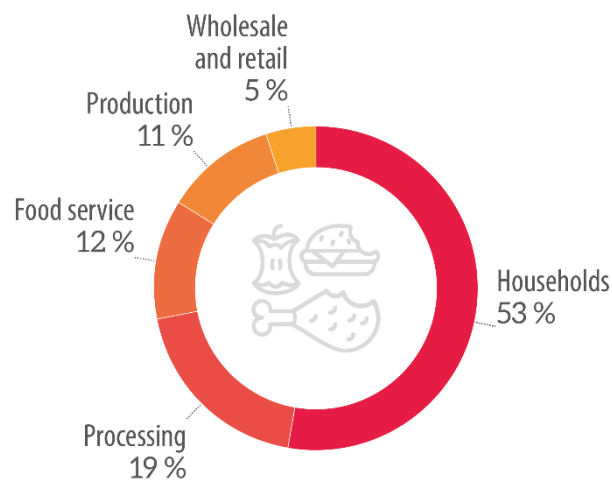
The FAO report cautions that finding solutions might be more complicated than it seems: for example, farmers and fish producers right up to consumers may have a private interest in reducing food loss or waste to increase their profit or income, but doing so may, in their perceptions, require investing money or time at levels that outweigh the benefits. In addition, as FAO explains, a

reduction of food waste by consumers and retailers in high-income countries does not necessarily mean that there is more food available to poor households in low-income countries, as it may conversely result in reduced demand and thus lower income and worsening food security.

In developed countries, a significant amount of food is wasted [at the consumption stage](#), while in developing countries food is lost mostly at the farmer-producer end of the food supply chain.

According to [FUSIONS](#), a major EU-funded research project that ran between 2012 and 2016, some [88 million tonnes](#) of food (173 kilograms per person) are wasted in the EU every year, with total associated costs estimated at €143 billion. The total amount of food produced in the EU was estimated at around 865 kg per person; this would also mean that we are wasting 20 % of the total food produced. As illustrated by Figure 1 below, the top contributors to food waste in the EU are households (53 %) and processing (19 %).² These two sectors account for 72 % of EU food waste. Of the remaining 28 per cent of food waste, 12 % comes from food service, 11 % from primary production and 5 % from wholesale and retail.

Figure 1: Breakdown of EU-28 food waste in 2012 by sector



Source: [EU FUSIONS](#) project, 2016

EU definition of food waste

While the notion of food being lost or wasted might seem simple, there is no commonly agreed definition of food loss and waste. FAO has worked towards the harmonisation of these notions, and 'food loss' is usually considered as occurring along the food supply chain from harvest/slaughter/catch up to, but not including, the retail level. 'Food waste', on the other hand, occurs at the retail and consumption levels. Food diverted to other economic uses, such as animal feed, is not considered quantitative food loss or waste. Similarly, inedible parts should not be considered as food waste.

In addition, as FAO points out, measuring waste by weight (using tonnes as reporting units, as is usually done) fails to account for the economic value of different commodities and can risk attributing a higher weight to low-value products just because they are heavier. In weight terms, a tonne of grain is the same as a tonne of fruit or a tonne of meat. However, in policies focused on reducing food waste, it is important to also account for the economic value of produce. FAO and the UN Environment Programme have been working on measuring progress towards target 12.3 through [two separate indices](#): the Food Loss Index (FLI) and the Food Waste Index (FWI).

In the EU, the [revised Waste Framework Directive](#), adopted in May 2018, defines 'food waste' based on the definition of 'food'³ in [Regulation \(EC\) No 178/2002](#) (the General Food Law Regulation); thus

'food waste' is defined as 'all food as defined in Article 2 of Regulation (EC) No 178/2002 of the European Parliament and of the Council that has become waste'.

Below are the key requirements set by the Waste Framework Directive to tackle food waste:

- by 31 March 2019, the Commission should adopt a delegated act establishing a **common methodology** and minimum quality requirements for the uniform **measurement** of levels of food waste;
- EU Member States should prepare food waste **prevention programmes** (as a part of their general waste prevention programmes) and monitor and assess their implementation by measuring the levels of food waste as from the first full calendar year after the adoption of that delegated act, that is, as of 2020;
- Member States should **encourage food donation** and other redistribution for human consumption, prioritising the designation of food for human use rather than for animal feed or for reprocessing into non-food products, as part of measures taken to prevent waste generation;
- consumers' understanding of '**use-by**' and '**best before**' dates should be improved in order to reduce food waste;
- by 31 December 2023, the Commission should examine the data provided by the Member States, with a view to considering the feasibility of establishing an **EU-wide food waste reduction target**, to be met by 2030. To that end, the Commission should submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council, accompanied, if appropriate, by a legislative proposal.

On 3 May 2019, the Commission adopted a [delegated decision \(2019/1597\)](#) establishing a common EU methodology to measure food waste. Accordingly, Member States were to start collecting data on food waste as of 2020 and report on national food waste levels by mid-2022. On 28 November 2019, the Commission adopted an [implementing decision](#) laying down further data requirements. A sub-group of the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste, dedicated to [food waste measurement](#), held meetings from March 2017 to February 2019, where presentations were given on experiences in different EU Member States, and a [webinar](#) on food waste measurement was organised for Member States in June 2020.

What the EU has done

In 2012, the Commission established a Working Group on Food Losses/Food Waste. Participants in this working group were stakeholders in the food supply chain and Commission representatives from different departments. In 2014, the Commission set up an Expert Group on Food Losses and Food Waste made up of representatives of the Member States and of the relevant Commission departments. In the autumn of 2015, experts from the individual Member States attended a conference on food waste prevention, in the context of [Expo 2015](#).

In June 2016, the Council of the EU adopted [conclusions](#) on food losses and food waste. Recalling the SDG food waste reduction target, the Council called, inter alia, for a common measurement and methodology among the Member States.

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) adopted a [special report](#) on food waste in 2016. The report criticised the Commission's approach to tackling the problem, observing that its efforts had been 'fragmented and intermittent', and that the lack of a common definition of food waste had hampered progress. The ECA concluded that many of the potential improvements do 'not require new initiatives nor [*sic*] more public funding, but rather involve a better alignment of existing policies, improved coordination, and clearly identifying the reduction of food waste as a policy objective'. The ECA advocated placing emphasis on prevention, as the benefits of avoiding waste outweigh those of dealing with it later. It also recommended that the Commission should clarify the interpretation of legal provisions that can discourage donation.

Food waste prevention and the need to adopt a more sustainable production and consumption model are among the EU's 2015 [Circular Economy action plan](#) priorities. The action plan envisaged that the Commission should establish a multi-stakeholder platform dedicated to food waste prevention. The [new Circular Economy action plan](#), adopted as part of the European Green Deal in March 2020, promises that the Commission will propose a target on food waste reduction as a key action.

EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste

The [EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste](#) was established in 2016. The forum brings together international organisations (FAO, the UNEP and the OECD), EU institutions, Member States' experts, as well as stakeholders from the food supply chain, including food banks and other NGOs. It aims to support all players in defining measures to prevent food waste (including recommendations for EU-level action), sharing best practices and evaluating progress.

The platform has supported the Commission in its work leading to the adoption in 2017 of EU [guidelines facilitating food donation](#) and in 2018 of EU guidelines on [feed use of food](#) no longer intended for consumption. To help lift existing barriers to food redistribution, the food donation guidelines provide clarity on the measures on food safety, labelling, VAT, etc. contained in EU legislation. The platform has also helped the Commission to develop a food waste measurement methodology. Last but not least, it contributes to improving date marking practices (see the Section, 'Some specific aspects of consumer food waste' below).

At its seventh meeting in December 2019, the EU Platform published [key recommendations](#) for action to accelerate the EU's progress towards the reduction of food loss and waste. Tackling food waste requires rethinking how we produce, market, distribute and consume food. Accordingly, the recommendations identify actions that can be taken at each stage of the food supply chain (primary production, manufacturing, hospitality/food services and consumption), but also actions involving the redistribution of surplus food through food donation. The recommendations also specify the players who are best placed to implement these actions: for example, food service businesses could charge customers by food weight, and charge customers for waste remaining on their plate in 'all you can eat' buffets. Customers eating in canteens should think to not take more than they can eat and ask for smaller portions. There are also recommendations that apply to all sectors, such as raising awareness, promoting the value of food and working to shift social norms so that wasting food is no longer socially acceptable.

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, in March 2020, the EU platform shared information on [initiatives taken in Member States](#) to prevent food loss and waste during the crisis.

Research

Several EU-funded research projects focus on tackling food waste, among them the FUSIONS project, mentioned above, which worked on estimating the amount of food waste in the EU. Another big project, [REFRESH](#) (2015-2019) brought together 26 partners from 12 European countries and China to contribute towards halving per capita food waste. Under this project, researchers worked in areas such as understanding consumer behaviour, exploring environmental and cost dimensions of food waste, designing innovations to improve valorisation of food waste and surplus food, and formulating EU policy options to reduce food loss and waste.

[Food 2030](#) is the name of the EU's research and innovation policy to transform food systems to make them resilient and fit for the future. One of the four main goals of Food 2030 is circularity, including tackling [food waste and resource efficiency](#). Funding for research in these areas will be made available under [Horizon Europe](#).

[EIT Food](#) is a food innovation initiative: being part of the European Institute of Innovation & Technology (EIT), its aim is to make the food system more sustainable, healthy and trusted. For example, under the [Innovator Fellowship](#), post-doctoral researchers work together on innovative

projects such as tackling food waste by turning used grain from breweries into a healthy dairy-free probiotic, and isolating valuable enzymes from by-products of industrial fruit-processing to deliver a zero-residue process.

European Parliament

Parliament has consistently backed the reduction of food waste. In its [resolution](#) of January 2012 on how to avoid food wastage, the Parliament called on the Commission to create specific food waste prevention targets for the Member States, as part of the waste prevention targets to be reached by 2014. It also urged the Council and the Commission to designate 2014 the European Year against Food Waste.

In 2015, in the framework of [resource efficiency](#), the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) urged the Commission to put forward instruments to combat food waste efficiently, including by setting a binding food waste-reduction target of at least 30 % by 2025 in the manufacturing, retail/distribution, food service/hospitality and household sectors. Members also prompted the Commission to promote the creation of conventions facilitating the distribution of unsold products to charities.

In a 2016 [resolution](#) on European farm management, Parliament stressed the need to tackle all forms of food wastage and called for a legal framework consistent with the circular economy principle, whereby clear rules are laid down for by-products, the use of raw materials is optimised, and residual waste is reduced as much as possible.

In its [resolution](#) of May 2017 on resource efficiency: reducing food waste and improving food safety, the Parliament supported a legally binding definition of food waste, a common method for measuring it, a 50 % reduction target by 2030 and an objective of at least a 30 % reduction by 2025 for EU countries. The Parliament argued that national authorities and stakeholders need to help consumers understand the difference between the 'best before' and 'use by' date and said that the Commission should assess the possible benefits of removing certain dates from products where there is no risk to public health or the environment.

MEPs have also put several [parliamentary written questions](#) to the Commission, such as: [E-003718/2016](#), [E-000323-2017](#), [E-002739-2018](#), [E-000157-2019](#) and [E-004881/2020](#).

In its [resolution](#) of 15 January 2020 on the European Green Deal, the Parliament called for an enforceable EU-wide food waste reduction target of 50 % by 2030, based on a common methodology; stressed that smart agriculture techniques and production methods are needed in order to ensure sufficient nutritious food for a growing population and to reduce food loss and waste; and underlined the positive effects that short food supply chains can have for reducing food waste.

Some specific aspects of consumer food waste

Food waste by consumers is a problem that has been mostly associated with and reported in high-income countries. However, according to FAO, emerging economies are also increasingly faced with this problem: the higher the household wealth, the more food is wasted. In low-income countries, most of the food loss occurs immediately after the harvesting stage, due to insufficient infrastructure to store or process excess food. Deficiencies in the cold chain, distribution, and transport infrastructure further aggravate the problem. In contrast to the situation in low-income countries, high-income countries generate the majority of their food waste at the consumer stage.

Most studies on food waste caused by consumers have taken place in high-income countries, especially in the United States and Europe. According to the FAO 2019 report, consumer waste is often a result of poor purchase planning, excess and impulse buying, confusion over labels ('best before' and 'use by'), poor in-home storing or stock management, preparation of too much food, and a lack of knowledge on how to use leftovers in other recipes instead of discarding them. Time

constraints play a role as well: when time is scarce, consumers buy less often and in greater quantities, which results in higher levels of waste.

According to the FAO 2019 report, one factor that contributes to food waste at the retail level in high-income countries is the tendency to sell homogenous and 'perfect' produce (in terms of colour, shape, size, etc.). As a result, food failing to meet these standards is discarded. Processing such 'imperfect' products into ready-made foods might be one way of utilising them. Some supermarkets have also started to sell ['wonky vegetables'](#) to customers at a reduced price.

Portion and package size are also important determinants of food waste: a [study](#) conducted in Sweden suggests that about a quarter of food waste could be related to package size. Consumers may be forced to buy more than they need because only large packages are available. Promotions or bulk discounts (e.g. three-for-two or economic packages) may entice consumers to buy on impulse, which encourages waste.

There may be generational differences as well: while the older generations might focus on planning meals and using up leftovers, [recent research](#) done amongst 'Generation Z' (18-25 year-olds) seems to suggest that younger people might have a more adventurous approach to eating and regularly want to try something new and different for their meals. This could drive up food waste in 'Gen Z' homes, and traditional approaches to food-waste messaging might not work. On the other hand, previous studies suggest that 'Generation Z' people are more environmentally conscious than their parents and grandparents. In the case of preventing food waste, however, personal preferences and day-to-day issues (such as limited access to big supermarkets without a car) are preventing a greater level of engagement with 'in-home activism' on this issue.

Many consumers worry about additives in food; consequently, there has been an ever growing demand for products with 'no additives or preservatives'. On the other hand, this [may aggravate](#) food waste, as additives/preservatives-free products tend to spoil more quickly.

As part of its communication package on food waste, the Commission has prepared some [quick tips](#) for those wishing to limit food waste in their daily lives, including things like meal planning, knowing the difference between the 'use by' and 'best before' labels, not shopping when hungry, and choosing imperfect fruit and vegetables.

Date marking

Consumption-related date labels should be sufficiently clear to avoid unsafe food being eaten and safe food being discarded. Under EU law, products must be labelled with either the 'best before' date or the 'use by' date. The 'best before' date (or 'date of minimum durability'), indicates the date until which the food retains its specific properties when properly stored, and the 'use by' date indicates the last day on which the product is considered to be safe. However, research shows that for many consumers the meaning of these labels is unclear or they confuse one with the other.⁴ A [Commission study](#) published in 2018 estimated that 10 % of food waste in the EU supply chain is linked to date marking. Its findings also revealed a wide variation in date marking practices in the EU.

The Commission has [initiated work](#) on date marking guidance supported by scientific advice from the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA). The EFSA will develop a risk-based approach to support food business operators in making decisions about date marking (e.g. choice of 'use by' or 'best before' date, length of shelf life, etc.) for their products. In particular, it is necessary to clearly differentiate between foods that, being at the end of their shelf life, might constitute an immediate danger to human health due to the growth of pathogenic micro-organisms, on the one hand and on the other, foods that, at the end of their shelf life, might become unfit for human consumption without constituting an immediate danger to human health. The EU date marking guidance is expected to be finalised by 2021.

Examples of national initiatives

France enacted legislation in February 2016 forbidding supermarkets from throwing away food that is still edible or usable as animal feed. All supermarkets with an area of 400 m² or more [were expected](#) to sign contracts with charities agreeing terms of regular donation. Supermarkets breaking the rules could face fines from €3 750 up to €75 000. The European Court of Auditors, however, [criticised](#) the French law in its special report in 2016 for not establishing the proportion of food to be donated: even if a supermarket signed an agreement to donate a mere 1 % of food, it would still be complying with the law. [Italy](#) has a similar law, but instead of penalties, it uses incentives that reward companies donating unsold food to charity with tax refunds.

The [Stop Wasting Food](#) movement (*Stop Spild Af Mad*) is Denmark's largest non-profit movement against food waste. Founded in 2008, it has worked in collaboration with the Danish government, the EU and the UN. For example, in an annual national charity project, volunteers collect tonnes of Christmas surplus food from supermarkets and distribute it free to food-insecure families. Stop Wasting Food is a co-founder of the REFOOD label, a national certification scheme for the food service sector, such as canteens and restaurants, which highlights their efforts towards less food waste and more recycling. Stop Wasting Food has also published a Leftovers Cookbook with the participation of Danish celebrity chefs.

In Ireland, the '[FoodCloud](#)' smartphone app connects the food industry with charities in an attempt to eradicate food waste by redirecting surplus produce. Retailers can upload a description of perfectly good food that they cannot sell, on the app. Local charities connected to the retailer through the platform get notified that food is available for collection at a specified time. The charity then responds to the offer either accepting or declining.

[Too Good To Go](#) is an app that lets consumers find and rescue unsold food at cafes, restaurants, hotels, shops and supermarkets, so that it will be eaten instead of thrown away.

The German government released its [national strategy](#) on food waste in February 2019. To mobilise the public, the government has launched the *Zu Gut für die Tonne* ([Too Good for the Bin](#)) programme, with a website offering background information and useful tips for everyday life, and an app with more than 700 cooking ideas including recipes from top chefs.

In the Netherlands, the [Dutch Taskforce](#), a coalition of companies across the food supply chain, as well as national and local authorities, was launched in January 2017, in collaboration with the initiative *Samen tegen Voedselverspilling* (together against food waste). Different organisations and institutions jointly work to arrive at innovative solutions to prevent and reduce food waste throughout the food chain. The Ministry of Agriculture launched in 2020 a [consumer campaign](#) on date marking (difference between 'use by' and 'best before' dates).

In [Italy](#), in some open-air markets, handwritten signs *Raccolta e Distribuzione gratis* (collection and distribution for free) go up at the end of the day. Food-waste prevention programmes in many supermarkets aim to ensure that food nearing the 'best before' date is redistributed to charities. Digital start-up [MyFoody](#) allows citizens to find local supermarkets that offer discounts on products nearing their expiration date.

In [Finland](#), a restaurant in Helsinki has established partnerships with suppliers/supermarkets around the city. Food that would otherwise get thrown away is diverted to the restaurant, where the chefs transform the ingredients into restaurant meals inspired by the availability of different foods. Any remaining edible food is directed to charities, while unavoidable food waste is composted.

In May 2019, the EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste adopted a document collecting [examples of food redistribution practices in Member States](#). This document complements the EU guidelines and provides an overview about their implementation at national level.

Looking ahead

On 29 September 2020, FAO organised the first ever [International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste](#). FAO highlights that the coronavirus pandemic has brought about a global awakening on the need to transform and rebalance the way we produce and consume our food. According to FAO, essential factors in implementing this transformation are the introduction of technologies and infrastructure, innovative solutions (including e-commerce platforms for marketing, retractable mobile food processing systems), new ways of working and good practices for managing food quality and reducing food loss and waste.

Again in September 2020, 10 big food retailers and providers, among them six of the largest food retailers in the world, [committed](#) to reducing their food waste by half by 2030. They will work together with nearly 200 suppliers who also committed to achieving a 50 % reduction target within their own operations. The retailers and suppliers also committed to measuring and publishing their food loss and waste data.

As mentioned earlier, the EU Member States should, according to the revised Waste Framework Directive, start collecting data on food waste as of 2020 and report on national food waste levels by mid-2022. By the end of 2023, the Commission will examine the data provided by Member States. The Waste Framework Directive also stipulates that in this context, the Commission must submit a report to the European Parliament and to the Council.

As part of the [European Green Deal](#), the Commission presented on 20 May 2020 a [Farm to Fork strategy](#) aimed at making food systems more sustainable. One of the targets included in the strategy is 'stepping up the fight against food waste'; to this end, the Commission will **propose legally binding targets across the EU by 2023** and revise EU rules on date marking to take account of consumer research. The strategy announces that the Commission will be submitting a **proposal for a revision of EU rules on date marking** in the fourth quarter of 2022. Again as part of the strategy, the Commission will develop a contingency plan for ensuring food supply and security, to strengthen the EU's response to food-related crises. According to the Commission, taking into account the experience gained through the coronavirus pandemic, this can [help prevent food waste](#) in crisis situations in the future, through identification of alternative markets for surplus food and facilitation of the recovery of surplus food for redistribution to those in need.

In its [conclusions](#) of 19 October 2020 on the Farm to Fork strategy, the Council reaffirms its commitment to SDG target 12.3 and welcomes the Commission's proposals to prevent or reduce food losses and food waste, in particular through the revision of EU rules seeking to prevent the misinterpretation or misuse of date marking. The Council recalls the Commission's obligation in the EU Waste Framework Directive to consider in 2023 the feasibility of establishing an EU-wide food waste reduction target based on the data reported by Member States and in accordance with the established common methodology.

On 16 November 2020, in a video-conference meeting, EU agriculture and fisheries ministers assessed the progress made in implementing the Council conclusions of June 2016 on food losses and waste, based on an [information note](#) prepared by the German Presidency. According to the note, almost all Member States have adopted varied legislative and non-legislative national measures to reduce food loss and waste (Appendix 1 to the document) and continue to integrate them into their national strategies. Furthermore, most Member States have taken measures at national level to encourage food donation. Examples of these include reducing VAT rates for donated food, revising legislation promoting food donations and providing support to food banks and non-profit organisations that distribute donated food.

In the European Parliament, the Commission communication presenting the Farm to Fork strategy was referred to the parliamentary committees in May 2020, and the file is in the [preparatory phase](#), awaiting a Conference of Committee Chairs' decision on its attribution to one or more committees for preparing a report.

MAIN REFERENCES

[Food Waste](#), European Commission website.

[The State of Food and Agriculture 2019. Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction](#), FAO, 2019.

ENDNOTES

- ¹ According to FAO, food waste has a global carbon footprint of about 7 % of all global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions caused by humans.
- ² However, the final report notes that there was considerable uncertainty around the estimate for the processing sector compared to all the other sectors, due to only four Member States providing information of sufficiently high quality.
- ³ According to Article 2 of [Regulation \(EC\) No 178/2002](#), 'food' (or 'foodstuff') means any substance or product, whether processed, partially processed or unprocessed, intended to be, or reasonably expected to be ingested by humans. Food includes drink, chewing gum and any substance, including water, intentionally incorporated into the food during its manufacture, preparation or treatment.
- ⁴ For example, the Flash Eurobarometer 425 survey illustrated that consumers are not fully aware of the differences between the two, as only 47 % of the people interviewed identified the correct definition for the 'best before' date and only 40 % for the 'use by' date, with significant differences between Member States.

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