

Waste Framework Directive

2005/0281(COD) - 03/12/2008

The Commission has presented its Green Paper on the management of bio-waste in the European Union.

According to estimations, the total annual arising of bio-waste in the EU is estimated at 76.5-102 Mt food and garden waste included in mixed municipal solid waste and up to 37 Mt from the food and drink industry.

Today, very different national policies apply to bio-waste management, ranging from little action in some Member States to ambitious policies in others. This can lead to increased environmental impacts and can hamper or delay full utilisation of advanced bio-waste management techniques. It should be investigated whether action on national level would be sufficient to ensure proper bio-waste management in the EU, or whether Community action is needed.

The revised Waste Framework Directive calls upon the Commission to carry out an assessment of the management of bio-waste, with a view to submitting a proposal, if appropriate.

This Green Paper explores options for the further development of the management of bio-waste. It summarizes important background information about current policies on biowaste management and new research findings in the field, presents core issues for debate, and invites stakeholders to contribute their knowledge and views on the way forward – contributions to this consultation process should be sent to the Commission by 15 March 2009.

In particular, the Green Paper:

- includes an overview of the current bio-waste management practices in the EU, and looks at the benefits and drawbacks of these methods, taking into account environmental, economic and social issues;
- looks at the impact of the existing regulatory measures. Bio-waste management is already subject to a number of EU and national legislative measures including obligatory diversion from landfills (Landfill Directive), encouragement of recycling (new Waste Framework Directive), incineration and composting (Incineration Directive, IPPC Directive, and Animal By-Products Regulation) and product standards and requirements (Organic Farming Regulation, the EU Ecolabel requirements for compost, national standards);
- examines additional measures including end-of-waste criteria for compost and guidelines for bio-waste management;
- considers the need for new legislation which could help direct more bio-waste towards recycling and energy recovery.

According to the Commission, **ideas for discussion** are as follows:

Better prevention of waste: the amount of bio-waste, although stabilized in recent years, has the potential to increase (especially in EU12). This may necessitate the strengthening of waste prevention policies.

Limiting landfilling: landfilling of bio-waste is in general the least desirable waste management solution and should be minimized. Still, in many Member States increased implementation efforts and additional enforcement measures may be necessary for many years to fully implement the Landfill Directive. It could therefore be useful to evaluate whether strengthening the current regulatory framework would bring additional environmental benefits. This could involve further action at EU level on the enforcement of the

current provisions or, if necessary, strengthening the Directive. Equally, greater awareness of the alternatives and the associated revenues could promote a shift, especially if changes in infrastructure are financially supported.

Treatment options for biowaste diverted from landfill: once diverted from landfills, bio-waste can go through several treatment options. It is difficult to decide on the one single environmentally most beneficial bio-waste management option under all circumstances due to a large number of variables and local considerations that need to be taken into account. Management of diverted bio-waste should be addressed by additional measures supporting a move from simple pre-treatment for landfill and incineration with little or no energy recovery into incineration with high energy recovery, anaerobic digestion with biogas production and recycling of bio-waste. In addition to assessments to highlight the benefits, it could be further strengthened with targets for the maximum allowed amount of residual waste for disposal (landfilling or incineration without energy recovery) or other measures in order to direct more bio-waste towards material and energy recovery.

Improving energy recovery: to help reach renewable energy targets, energy recovery could be significantly enhanced by developments in the area of anaerobic digestion for production of biogas and by improving the efficiency of waste incineration, for example by using cogeneration of electricity and heat.

Increasing recycling: new action to strengthen the recycling of bio-waste could comprise three inter-related issues: recycling targets, rules for the quality and use of compost and supporting action in the shape of separate collection.

Contributing to Soil Improvement: to avoid the risk of soil pollution and strengthen user confidence, it could be necessary to introduce common standards on bio-waste treatment and compost quality.

Other uses of bio-waste: many planned and ongoing research activities aim at developing alternative means of exploiting residual biomass and bio-waste to address the climate change issue and soil quality deterioration. Further bio-waste treatment options are being explored at research level (e.g. biochar). It is necessary to examine the advantages and disadvantages of the advantages and disadvantages of biowaste management techniques.

In late 2009, the Commission intends to present its analysis of the responses received together with, if appropriate, its proposals and/or initiatives for an EU strategy on the management of bio-waste.