How to avoid food wastage: strategies for a more efficient food chain in the EU

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The Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development adopted the own-initiative report by Salvatore Caronna (S&D, IT) on how to avoid food wastage: strategies for a more efficient food chain in the EU and noted that every year in Europe a growing amount of healthy, edible food – some estimates say up to 50% – is lost along the entire food supply chain, in some cases all the way up to the consumer, and becomes waste. It notes also that a study published by the Commission estimates annual food waste generation in the 27 Member States at approximately 89 million tonnes varying considerably between individual countries and the various sectors, without even considering agricultural food waste or fish catches returned to the sea. Total food waste will have risen to by 40% increase by 2020 unless additional preventive actions or measures are taken.

Members call on the Council, the Commission, the Member States and players in the food supply chain to address as a matter of urgency the problem of food waste along the entire supply and consumption chain and to devise guidelines for improving the efficiency of the food supply chain sector by sector. They call on the Commission, in this context, to raise awareness of the ongoing work in both the High Level Forum for a Better Functioning Food Supply Chain and the European Sustainable Consumption and Production Roundtable, including with regard to recommendations on how to tackle food waste.

Members urge the Council and the Commission to designate 2013 the European Year against Food Waste, as a key information and awareness-raising initiative for European citizens and to focus national governments' attention on this important topic, with a view to allocating sufficient funds to tackle the challenges of the near future.

The Commission is asked to:

- analyse the causes and effects of the disposal, wastage and landfilling annually in Europe of approximately 50% of the food produced and to ensure that this includes a detailed analysis of the waste as well as an assessment of the economic, environmental, nutritional and social impacts;
- take practical measures towards halving food waste by 2025 and at the same time preventing the generation of bio-waste;
- assess the impact of a policy of enforcement with regard to food waste;
- make an analysis of the whole food chain in order to identify in which food sectors food waste is occurring most, and which solutions can be used to prevent food waste, noting that it is vital to reduce food waste along the entire food chain, from farm to fork;
- cooperate with the FAO in setting common targets to reduce global food waste;
- create specific food waste prevention targets for Member States, as part of the waste prevention targets to be reached by Member States by 2014, as recommended by the 2008 Waste Framework Directive;
- when drawing up development policies, to support measures aimed at reducing waste along the entire food supply chain in developing countries where production methods, post-harvest management, processing and packaging infrastructure and processes are problematic and inadequate;
- put forward a legislative proposal defining the typology of 'food waste' and in this context also to establish a separate definition of food residuals for biofuels or biowaste, which are separate from ordinary food waste since they are reutilised for energy purposes;
- consider possible amendments to the public procurement rules on catering and hospitality services so that, all other conditions being equal, when contracts are awarded, priority is given to

undertakings that guarantee that they will redistribute free of charge any unallocated (unsold) items to groups of citizens who lack purchasing power, and that promote specific activities to reduce waste upstream, such as giving preference to agricultural and food products produced as near as possible to the place of consumption.

The Commission and Member States are asked to encourage the **exchange of best practice** and **promote awareness-raising campaigns to inform the public** of the value of food and agricultural produce, the causes and effects of food waste and ways of reducing it, thereby fostering a scientific and civic culture guided by the principles of sustainability and solidarity.

Members welcome the initiatives already taken in various Member States aimed at recovering, locally, unsold and discarded products throughout the food supply chain in order to redistribute them to groups of citizens below the minimum income threshold who lack purchasing power. They feel that **investing in methods leading to a reduction in food waste** could result in a reduction in the losses incurred by agri-food businesses and, consequently, in a lowering of food prices, thus potentially also improving the access to food by poorer segments of the population. The Commission is asked to determine **ways and means of better involving agri-food businesses, wholesale markets, shops, distribution chains, public and private caterers, restaurants, public administrations and NGOs in anti-waste practices**.

Lastly, the report calls for measures to reduce food waste upstream, such as dual-date labelling (‘sell by’ and ‘use by’), and the discounted sale of foods close to their expiry date and of damaged goods.