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

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The European Parliament adopted a resolution on how to avoid food wastage: strategies for a more efficient food chain in the EU.

The resolution notes 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.

Affirming that food security is a basic human right, 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 **2014** 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.

Members call for the retargeting of support measures at EU level regarding the distribution of food products to the Union's least-favoured citizens, Community aid for the supply of milk and dairy products to schoolchildren, and the programme for encouraging the consumption of fruit in schools, with a view to

preventing food waste. They call on the Commission to 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.

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 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.

The resolution 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. In this context, it asks the Commission and the Member States to clarify the meaning of the date labels (‘best before’, ‘expiry date’ and ‘use by’) in order to reduce consumers' uncertainty regarding food edibility.

Lastly, Members call on the Member States to encourage and support initiatives geared to **stimulating sustainable small- and medium-scale production** that is linked to local and regional markets and consumption.