

Initiative on resource efficiency: reducing food waste, improving food safety

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the own-initiative report by Biljana BORZAN (S&D, HR) on the initiative on resource efficiency: reducing food waste and improving food safety.

Members stressed the urgent need to reduce the amount of food waste, and to improve resource efficiency in the EU **at every step of the food chain** given that in highly industrialised countries food is wasted predominantly at the sales and consumption stages, while in developing countries food begins to be wasted at the manufacturing and processing stages.

Members called on the Commission to:

- identify EU legislation that might hamper the effective combating of food waste and analyse how it might be adapted to meet the food waste prevention objective;
- evaluate the potential impact of new relevant legislative proposals on food waste;
- examine, by 31 December 2020, the possibility of setting up **binding EU-wide food waste reduction targets** to be met by 2025 and 2030 on the basis of measurements calculated in accordance with a common methodology;
- draw a clear distinction in its future policies between **food wastage** and **food loss**, which is unavoidable at primary production level owing to force majeure events such as storms;
- support a **legally binding definition of food waste** and to adopt, by 31 December 2017, a **common methodology**, including minimum quality requirements, for the uniform measurement of food waste levels. A common EU definition and methodology for measuring food 'loss', applicable to the entire supply chain, would facilitate Member States' and stakeholders' efforts in calculating and reducing food waste;
- update the list of foods currently **exempt from 'best before' labelling** in order to prevent food waste.

They called on the Commission and the Member States to:

- put existing **financial support** for combating food waste on a permanent footing;
- engage in **awareness-raising and communication campaigns** on how to prevent food waste;
- use the following definition of 'food waste': 'food intended for human consumption, either in edible or inedible status, removed from the production or supply chain to be discarded, including at primary production, processing, manufacturing, transportation, storage, retail and consumer levels, with the exception of primary production losses';
- provide **economic incentives** to support the collection of unused food, which can either be redistributed to charities or re-used for another secondary purpose which prevents food waste, such as turning unused food into a valuable resource, by using it in the production of feed for livestock and domestic animals;
- consider **variable pricing linked to expiry dates**, as a tool for reducing the quantity of edible food products which become waste (i.e. by introducing discounts in proportion to the time remaining before product expiry).

Members highlighted the initiatives contained in the Circular Economy Action Plan covering measures for establishing a financial support platform to attract investment and innovations aimed at reducing losses, as

well as the guidelines addressed to the Member States for converting some food losses or agricultural by-products into energy.

They stressed that:

- **energy needs** should be met by using waste and by-products that are not useful in any other process higher up the waste hierarchy;
- successfully combating food waste also requires **strong recycling levels** in the revised Waste Framework Directive and the integration of the **cascading principle for biomass** in EU energy policy;
- food waste reduction measures must not compromise **food safety, environmental standards or animal protection standards**, notably animal health and welfare.

Members called on the Member States to:

- take measures to reduce food losses along the whole supply chain, including in primary production, transportation and storage;
- take the measures required to achieve an EU food waste reduction target of 30% by 2025 and 50% by 2030 compared to the 2014 baseline;
- adopt specific food waste prevention measures within their **waste prevention programmes** and in particular to establish **voluntary agreements** and create **economic and fiscal incentives** (e.g. changing the VAT rules) for donating food and other means of limiting food waste;
- encourage home composting and the separating out of bio-waste at source, and ensure that this waste is subject to bio-recycling;
- use the European Agriculture Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) to reduce food waste in primary production and the processing sector.

Lastly, Members welcomed the creation of the **EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste** and called on it to support the development of a variety of consumer information channels as well as consumer information and foodstuff education programmes.