

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

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The European Parliament adopted by 623 votes to 33, with 20 abstentions, a resolution on the initiative on resource efficiency: reducing food waste and improving food safety.

Members recalled that the FAO estimates that each year approximately 1.3 billion tonnes of food is lost or wasted. Food wastage has **high social, economic and environmental costs**, as well as ethical consequences.

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), 795 million people in the world do not have enough food to lead a healthy and active life.

In this regard, Parliament 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. It called on the Member States to take the measures required to achieve a Union food waste reduction target of **30 % by 2025 and 50 % by 2030** compared to the 2014 baseline.

Members called on the Commission to:

- identify EU legislation that might hamper the effective combating of food waste and assess the potential impact of new 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;
- 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;
- draw up a report by 31 December 2018 to assess the need for **cross-cutting regulatory measures** in the sustainable consumption and production sector;
- update the list of foods currently exempt from 'best before' labelling in order to prevent food waste;
- **propose a change in the VAT Directive** that would explicitly authorise tax exemptions on food donations.

Members suggested:

- putting existing **financial support** for combating food waste on a permanent footing;
- engaging in **awareness-raising and communication campaigns** on how to prevent food waste;
- providing **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;
- improving the **understanding, especially by consumers**, of 'use by' and 'best before' dates, and of the usability of foodstuffs after the 'best before' date;
- considering **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).

Parliament 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.

It 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.

Parliament also called on the Member States to:

- take measures to reduce food losses along the whole supply chain, including in primary production, transportation and storage;
- adopt specific food waste prevention measures within their waste prevention programmes;
- 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, the use of **Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD)** should be promoted to facilitate food donations by financing the costs of collection, transport, storage and distribution.