

Waste Framework Directive: textiles and food waste

2023/0234(COD) - 05/07/2023 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE : to revise the waste framework Directive to improve the environmental sustainability of food and textile waste management.

PROPOSED ACT: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: the European Parliament decides in accordance with the ordinary legislative procedure and on an equal footing with the Council.

BACKGROUND: nearly 59 million tonnes of food (131 kg/inhabitant) are wasted in the EU each year with estimated market value of EUR 132 billion. Over half of food waste (53%) is generated by households, followed by the processing and manufacturing sector (20%).

To accelerate the EU's progress, the Commission proposes that, by 2030, Member States reduce food waste by 10%, in processing and manufacturing, and by 30% (per capita), jointly at retail and consumption (restaurants, food services and households).

In addition, textile waste which also burdens limited natural resources. Around 78% of the textiles waste is not separately collected by consumers and ends up in mixed household waste, destined to be incinerated or landfilled.

The European Green Deal and the Circular Economy Action Plan call for reinforced and accelerated EU and Member State action to ensure environmental sustainability of the textiles and food sectors as they represent top resource intensive sectors causing significant negative environmental externalities, where financing and technological gaps impede progress towards the transition to a circular economy and decarbonisation.

This proposal is set through a targeted amendment of the Directive 2008/98/EC on waste (WFD) which is the only legal vehicle to regulate textile waste prevention and management in the EU.

CONTENT: the Commission is proposing to amend the Waste Framework Directive (WFD) focusing on two resource intensive sectors: **textiles and food**, with the following general objectives:

- to reduce environmental and climate impacts, increase environment quality and improve public health associated with textiles waste management in line with the waste hierarchy;
- to reduce the environmental and climate impacts of food systems associated with food waste generation.

Textile waste

Textile waste is exacerbated by the so-called 'fast fashion', which is characterised by more frequent fashion collections being placed on the market with low-priced products that do not internalise environmental externalities, encourage customers to shop impulsively and incentivises purchasing larger quantities of clothes. Preventing, preparing for re-use and recycling textile waste can help reduce the global environmental footprint of the sector.

It is proposed that the Member States should ensure, **by 1 January 2025**, the separate collection of textiles for re-use, preparation for re-use and recycling.

The proposal intends to accelerate the development of the separate collection, sorting, reuse and recycling sector for textiles in the EU.

Food waste

Food waste is one of the largest sources of inefficiency in the agri-food chain. The targeted amendment of the WFD builds on existing requirements addressing major aspects of food waste prevention (definition of food waste and common food waste measurement methodology, obligations for Member States to reduce food waste at each stage of the food supply chain, monitor and report annually on food waste levels, preparation of national food waste prevention programmes) and management (e.g., separate collection).

Setting legally binding food waste reduction **targets** for Member States to achieve by 2030 is expected to reinforce efforts to identify and scale-up effective strategies and initiatives both within and across Member States by: streamlining the contribution of food business operators, notably in the context of cross-border supply chains; helping to ensure that drivers of food waste generation (market and behavioural) are addressed consistently and simultaneously by all Member States, in line with actions taken by the – so far few – frontrunners; and accelerating the development of effective **national food waste prevention strategies** through the spreading of good practices and further leveraging the EU knowledge base related to food waste prevention.

Extended producer responsibility

The proposal puts forward plans for Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) systems that would require fashion brands and textile producers to pay fees to help fund local authorities' waste collection.

Since the textile sector is 99% comprised of small and medium sized enterprises, the implementation of an extended producer responsibility scheme for textiles, textile-related and footwear products should aim to **reduce as much as possible administrative burdens**.

The producers of textiles and footwear should finance the costs of collecting, sorting for re-use, preparing for re-use and recycling, and of the recycling and other treatment of collected used and waste textiles and footwear, including unsold consumer products considered waste. This will give producers incentives to reduce waste and increase the circularity of textile products – designing better products from the start.