



## Frequently Asked Questions: Reducing Food Waste in the EU

Brussels, 5 July 2023

### 1. Why is it important to reduce food waste?

Food waste has a huge economic, social and environmental impact. [Nearly 59 million tonnes of food waste](#) (131 kg/inhabitant) are generated in the EU each year. This represents an estimated loss of €132 billion.

Around 10% of all food supplied to retail, restaurants, food services (e.g., school and corporate canteens, hospitals, etc.) and households is wasted. At the same time, some 32.6 million people cannot afford a quality meal (including meat, chicken, fish or vegetarian equivalent) every second day.

Food waste has a huge environmental impact, accounting for 252 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents or about 16% of the total greenhouse gas emissions from the EU food system. If food waste were a Member State, it would be the fifth largest emitter of GHG emissions. Wasting food also puts unnecessary burden on limited natural resources, such as land and water use.

### 2. What is food waste and where does it occur?

Food waste is discarded food and its associated inedible parts (such as bones or fruit cores). Food waste occurs at all stages of the food supply chain, from farm to fork. However, the largest share is generated at consumption, which is a key area of focus for food waste prevention programmes.

Following the first EU-wide monitoring of food waste according to a common EU methodology, Eurostat estimated that 53% of food waste generated in the EU arises in households, 7% at wholesale and retail, and 9% in restaurants and food services. Other sectors contributing to food waste in the EU are primary production (11%) and food processing and manufacturing (20%).

### 3. What do we propose to do?

The EU is committed to achieving the global [Sustainable Development Goal \(SDG\) Target 12.3 to halve per capita food waste at the retail and consumer level by 2030](#) and reduce food losses along the food production and supply chains.

To accelerate the EU's progress towards this goal, 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).

The results of the first EU-wide monitoring of food waste levels carried out in 2020 will serve as a baseline to assess progress. An earlier reference year may be considered for Member States which provide evidence of action taken before 2020, with monitoring confirming the progress made.

By the end of 2027, there will be a formal review of progress made by Member States, and the possibility to correct course if evidence suggests that the EU can contribute even more towards the global ambition.

### 4. What are the expected benefits of our proposal to reduce food waste?

Reducing food waste will reduce the resources needed to produce the food we eat. Tackling food waste is a triple win: it saves food for human consumption; it lowers the environmental impact of food production and consumption; and it helps businesses and consumers to save money. **A 4-person household would save on average about €400 per year if food waste is reduced in line with our proposal.**

### 5. How can Member States make more progress?

EU waste legislation already requires Member States to implement **national food waste**

**prevention programmes** and, importantly, to reduce food waste at each stage of the supply chain, monitor and report on food waste levels. However, so far, the amount of food waste is not decreasing enough.

With its proposal, the Commission aims to ensure sufficient and consistent response by all Member States to reduce food waste along the food supply chain and in households. It should provide impetus for Member States to take ambitious actions and to support behavioural change as well as strengthen collaboration between actors across the whole food value chain and other relevant players (e.g., academia, NGOs, financial institutions, etc).

International organisations and coalitions call on governments to follow the '[Target-Measure-Act](#)' evidence-based approach to achieve rapid and concrete results regarding food waste prevention. The experience of front-runner countries as well as EU supporting measures in place to facilitate sharing of learning and best practice will help drive progress across Member States. Such countries, for example the Netherlands, France and Germany, have established **national food waste prevention strategies** and established governance mechanisms bringing together all players, guiding and coordinating efforts, for instance through voluntary agreements, towards clear and shared food waste reduction objectives. Reduction of food waste at the consumer level requires ongoing consumer campaigns and behavioural change interventions as well as the integration of food waste prevention in school curricula. **Many Member States facilitate food donation**, including through legislative measures and fiscal incentives, to help ensure redistribution of surplus food to those in need.

[Recommendations of the citizens panel](#), organised by the Commission to address food waste prevention and to provide a citizens' perspective, can also serve as a guide to help Member States achieve the objectives.

## 6. What is the EU doing to support Member States in reducing food waste?

Since 2015, the EU has set out a dedicated action plan to reduce food waste across the EU.

The EU's first [Circular Economy Action Plan](#), adopted in 2015, called on the Commission to establish a multi-stakeholder platform dedicated to food waste prevention. Established in 2016, the [EU Platform on Food Losses and Food Waste \(FLW\)](#) has supported the Commission in its work to adopt EU guidelines to facilitate [food donation](#) and the [feed use of food no longer intended for consumption](#), and develop a food waste measurement [methodology](#). It also supports all actors in taking action to facilitate understanding and use of [date marking](#).

**Sharing best practice, resources and learning** from food waste prevention to accelerate progress in Member States is facilitated through the EU Platform on FLW and the digital [EU Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub](#), which includes a section dedicated to Member States' initiatives to reduce food losses and food waste.

As over half of food waste is generated at consumption, the Commission also seeks to support all players in taking action to **support consumer behavioural change**. A best practice [compendium](#), elaborated by the [European Consumer Food Waste Forum](#) brings together tools, solutions and recommendations to effectively address consumer food waste.

EU **research and innovation** also provides opportunities to investigate and address food loss and waste, with research projects currently ongoing under Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe. Other funding instruments for food waste prevention actions include the [LIFE environmental programme](#) and [Interreg Europe](#), which integrates food waste prevention as part of regional cooperation.

The Commission is also awarding [grants](#), under the Single Market Programme, to help Member States and stakeholders improve food waste measurement and prevention initiatives, in collaboration with the [European Health and Digital Executive Agency](#) (HaDEA).

To help guide effective action, the Commission is working to strengthen the evidence base for food waste prevention interventions, through their ongoing assessment by means of the [evaluation framework](#) developed by the Joint Research Centre and its continued development.

## 7. As a private citizen, what can I do to prevent food waste?

Citizens have clearly voiced their concern and support the need to step up action to reduce food waste in the EU - views that are reflected in the [recommendations of the Citizens' Panel](#), convened by the Commission between 16 December 2022 and 12 February 2023.

Everyone can play a role in reducing food waste. Often with minimal effort, food waste can be reduced, which also leads to saving money and helping to protect the environment. For instance, planning meals or using leftovers for lunch next day can be helpful, or when buying food for immediate consumption, picking products that are closest to the expiration date. The Commission

has prepared some [quick tips](#) for people who wish to limit food waste in their daily lives.

**For more information**

[Food waste proposal](#)

[Food waste page](#)

[Press release on the package](#)

[Factsheet](#)

Leaflet **How to reduce food waste in your daily life** [here](#).

[European Food Loss and Waste Prevention Hub - Explore the Member States Initiatives \(europa.eu\)](#)

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