EVERY CRUMB COUNTS

JOINT FOOD WASTAGE DECLARATION
Every Crumb Counts

We, the co-signers, commit to the objective of reducing food wastage throughout the food chain and to contributing to halving EU edible food waste by 2020. We call on all stakeholders involved in the food chain from farm to fork and beyond to take further action to prevent and reduce edible food wastage on a European and global scale.

While hunger is the world’s number one health risk, about one third of food for human consumption is lost or wasted globally each year. In addition, when food is wasted all of the resources that were put into its production are lost. Not only are these increasingly scarce resources, such as water and fuel, lost, but greenhouse gas emissions are also associated with the disposal of food. Therefore, food wastage represents a missed opportunity to feed the growing world population, a major waste of resources and a needless source of greenhouse gas emissions that impacts climate change. It also has negative economic consequences for everyone along the food chain when food goes to waste.

This declaration focuses on food wastage, which is the decrease in edible food mass that was originally intended for human consumption, in line with the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation’s (FAO) definition. Food wastage includes both food losses, which occur at the production, post-harvest and processing stages, and food waste, which arises at the retail and consumption stages. We speak of “food wastage” to clearly distinguish the concept from waste, which is defined in the EU’s Waste Framework Directive, and to emphasize the need for a supply chain approach.

Inedible crop residues, inedible animal parts and by-products, as defined in Article 5 of the Waste Framework Directive, are not considered food wastage, nor are food products that are sent for redistribution but stay within the human food chain. This declaration takes into consideration that what is ‘inedible’ is culturally determined in some cases. In accordance with the European Economic and Social Committee’s Opinion, the classification of what is inedible or unusable should remain flexible because as knowledge and technology advance, items that are currently considered inedible or unusable as by-products could become edible or usable.

By adopting this declaration, we wish to set a benchmark in the global fight against food wastage. We do this because it is crucial for the long-term sustainability of the food chain. In doing so, we will contribute towards the EU’s goal of achieving a resource efficient economy and a sustainable food chain. This declaration explores how new markets and better food recovery can contribute to economic growth. We also support the many global, European, national and individual voluntary efforts to reduce food wastage.
Food Wastage Hierarchy

We believe that the most preferred solution is to prevent food wastage from occurring in the first place.

When food is unable to stay within the human food chain and be redirected to feed people, the optimal solution will depend on a case by case evaluation. A first consideration should be whether it can be redirected to feed livestock subject to safety, quality and legislative requirements being met. Otherwise, consideration should be given to using it as a raw material for other industries (e.g. detergents, inks, cosmetics, plastics and pharmaceuticals) or recovery (e.g. transformed into fertilizer or compost or used for renewable energy production). Only as a last resort should it be incinerated without energy recovery or sent to landfill.

The following image depicts this hierarchy, and is based on existing food waste hierarchies.

Individual cases may deviate from this hierarchy, in accordance with Article 4 of the EU Waste Framework Directive, which states that “specific waste streams [may depart] from the hierarchy where this is justified by life-cycle thinking on the overall impacts of the generation and management of such waste”. Environmental and social benefits of different management options depend significantly on local conditions, such as population density and proximity to other industries and farms. Food waste management should also be in accordance with Article 13 of the Waste Framework Directive on Protection of human health and the environment.

The better food safety and quality are preserved, the more likely it is that food wastage can be prevented, used or redirected to feed animals and industrial use. So protecting food from damage and spoilage along the chain is paramount.

This declaration proceeds in descending order of the food wastage hierarchy, and focuses on the most preferable solutions.
Prevent Food Wastage

Supply Chain Approach

We commit to:

1. **Raising awareness of food wastage along the food chain.** Food wastage occurs all along the food chain and requires action from all food chain actors. We encourage all partners of the food chain to identify where food wastage occurs and take appropriate actions.

2. **Contributing to the development and dissemination of best practices** (e.g. toolkits) for identifying and preventing food wastage in consultation with relevant supply chain actors.

3. **Contributing to the development of a common EU definition and methodology** for assessing food wastage in the EU. The lack of a common EU definition and methodology is complicating the quantification and monitoring of on-going food waste prevention efforts, as existing EU data is currently not reliable. In the meantime, we will take actions based on a qualitative assessment.

We call on policymakers to:

4. **Pay particular attention to food wastage when developing policy and setting public procurement standards.** The impact on food wastage should be taken into account in the impact assessment for relevant policies. In addition, efforts by food operators to prevent and reduce food wastage should be taken into account when awarding, amongst others, public procurement contracts. Furthermore, policymakers should look into methods for encouraging stakeholders to take action at the top of the food wastage hierarchy.

5. **Develop, together with relevant food chain players, guidelines for Member States to optimise the use of food that has been withdrawn** (e.g. for quality reasons) but is still safe and suitable for use, with strict adherence to food and feed safety legislation.

6. **Increase the focus of EU development cooperation** on measures to prevent food wastage in developing and low income countries (e.g. infrastructure and storage facilities, safe food handling training, tailored packaging solutions). Food wastage in low-income countries occurs mainly from losses, and arises from limitations in harvesting techniques, storage and cooling facilities, infrastructure, inadequate packaging and marketing systems.

Information to consumers

We commit to:

7. **Encouraging food operators to help consumers make better use of information** (e.g. relaying the messages of the European Commission’s 10 Tips to reduce food waste) and storage advice. Coordinated and enduring EU-wide communication initiatives (e.g. social media, partnerships with schools and national media) are needed to raise awareness of ways to reduce food wastage and to achieve long-term results.

8. **Encouraging food operators to provide information about the actual meaning of “use-by” and “best before” dates in collaboration with the European Commission’s information campaign.**

Innovation and product development

We commit to:

9. **Encouraging food and packaging operators to further innovative ways to guarantee and preserve food quality, freshness and safety,** including by looking for packaging solutions that allow shelf-life extension and by offering a range of portion sizes, as different packaging sizes and in-pack portioning can help cater to different lifestyles and household needs. Innovations that help keep packaging intact all along the supply chain can also be a contribution.

We call on policymakers to:

10. **Pay particular attention to food wastage when evaluating applications for new innovations** that have the potential to prevent spoilage.

11. **Help fund research on innovation** to prevent food wastage. Developing more sustainable processing, preservation, packaging technologies and logistic systems to prevent food losses and waste is a key element of the Strategic Research Agenda 2007-2020 (2013-2020 and Beyond) for the European Technology Platform (ETP) on Food for Life.
12. Take into account packaging's role in protecting food and thereby preventing food wastage in all EU and Member State waste and packaging-related policies. Bearing this function in mind, simply reducing packaging is not always preferable because as packaging is reduced and/or compromised, the likelihood of food spoilage arising increases. Eventually a point is reached at which the negative environmental impact of food wastage outweighs the environmental benefits of using less packaging material. Instead, policies should allow for further optimisation of packaging, which in certain product supply chains for instance may mean more or less packaging use, or alternative packaging designs.

Redirect to feed people

Support food redistribution

We commit to:
13. Raising awareness of food redistribution channels. Good practices on food redistribution should be included in EU food wastage databases.

We call on policymakers to:
14. Develop EU Food Donation Guidelines for food donors and food redistribution organisations on how to comply with the EU Food Hygiene legislation. It should clarify the types of food that are suitable for donation, conditions for transport, traceability and legal liability, among other issues.

15. Harmonise the interpretation of Articles 16 and 74 of the VAT Directive, confirming that the VAT rate should be fairly low, or even close to zero, for donated food close to its “best before” date or not fit for sale. Currently, 13 Member States do not require VAT to be paid on donated food because they interpret Article 74 of the VAT Directive to mean that such food has a small or zero taxable value. This interpretation should be adopted by all EU Member States.

16. Allow a tax deduction for food donations. For example, in the U.S., Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code allows certain businesses to earn a tax deduction for donating food to an approved agency, which is equivalent to half the value of the donated food.

17. Explore how Good Samaritan Food Donation laws can support food donations, while also ensuring that donated food is safe. Such laws exempt food redistribution organisations and donors from prosecution if food is donated in good faith. The Good Samaritan laws in the U.S., Australia and Italy are some examples.

Create markets

We commit to:
18. Encouraging food operators to explore, together with stakeholders, how to create markets for food and food components that are not usable for quality reasons but are still edible and safe for use (e.g. price reductions, jams and soups from imperfect-looking produce) or culturally unappetising (e.g. marketing French fries with skins).

19. Encouraging food operators to explore, together with stakeholders, alternative markets for would-be food loss arising from products, ingredients and intermediate products so that food components can still be utilised as food. This requires innovation in markets and supply chain management.
Redirect to feed animals and to industrial use

We call on all stakeholders to:

20. Consider how would-be food wastage that is not fit or cannot feasibly make it to human consumption can be converted into valuable commodities, such as animal feed or industrial products. Using would-be food wastage from food supply chain actors as a raw material for another industry helps reduce agricultural pressures on the environment and generates mutual value by creating cost savings and new revenue.

Recovery

We call on all stakeholders to:

21. Work together to promote the development of soil enrichment and energy recovery options that suit the needs of food chain partners, including consumers, while respecting the food wastage hierarchy.

Co-Signers
Supporters

The following organisations support the overall aims and objectives of the declaration.

Think-Eat-Save
[A campaign of the ‘Save Food Initiative’]

Wageningen University

WRAP

AIBI [International Association of Plant Bakers]

The views expressed in this Declaration do not necessarily reflect the views of the Supporters and do not prejudge their positions.

Footnotes

i 10 Things You Need To Know About Hunger, World Food Programme 2013.

ii Global Food Losses and Food Waste, Swedish Institute for Food and Biotechnology, commissioned by FAO 2012.

iii Food mass that was not originally intended for human consumption is therefore not considered food wastage

iv Idem

v Idem 2

vi includes (inedible) residues from production

vii Civil society’s contribution to a strategy for prevention and reduction of food losses and food waste, European Economic and Social Committee, 20 March 2013.

viii as outlined in the EC Resource Efficiency Roadmap

ix Relevant to the on-going review of EU waste legislation, national Waste Prevention Programmes, Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and the strategy and action plan on Innovating for Sustainable Growth: a bio-economy for Europe

x FAO and UN Environment Programme’s “Think, Eat, Save” campaign

xi European Parliament’s Written declaration on food waste and Resolution on Avoiding food waste: how to improve the efficiency of the food chain in the EU, European Commission’s funding of research to measure food waste, dissemination of information and good practices database

xii UK “Love Food Hate Waste” campaign, Dutch working group on Food Waste, France’s food waste action plan, Irish draft Household Food Waste Collection Regulation, Spanish food waste initiative, Swedish National Waste Prevention Program which makes food waste a key topic, Norwegian ForMat food waste reduction project, and initiatives in Belgium

xiii Wageningen University’s Ladder of Moerman, Food Waste Pyramid for London, OVAM (Public Waste Agency of Flanders)’s food waste hierarchy, FEVIA (Fédération de l’Industrie Alimentaire/Federatie Voedingsindustrie)’s food waste hierarchy and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s food waste hierarchy.

xiv Idem 2

xv Approximately 60% of household food waste in the UK arises from food that is perishable or has a short shelf-life not being used in time – Consumer Attitudes to Food Waste and Food Packaging, WRAP, 2013

xvi Pre-packed foods must indicate a “best before” or “use by” date, according to Articles 9 and 10 of Directive 2000/13/EC and Article 9 of Regulation 1169/2011, which will replace the former on 13 December 2014. While the majority of food waste arises from items which are rarely marked with “best before” or “use by” labels, sometimes date labels are misunderstood and lead consumers to waste food unnecessarily (EHI, 2011). More than 60% of EU citizens believe that better information on food product labels, e.g. how to interpret ‘best before’ dates and information on storage and preparation, would help people to waste less food (Eurobarometer, 2011).

xvii Continuous Environmental Improvement, European Food SCP Round Table, 2012

xviii According to Articles 9 and 10 of Directive 2000/13/EC and Article 9 of Regulation 1169/2011, which will replace the former on 13 December 2014.

xix DK, EE, DE, FR, HU, IE, IT, LT, NL, PL, PT, UK