

Retail & Wholesale in new initiative to curb food waste

At a high-level Commission Conference on Food Waste today, EuroCommerce and other members of the EU Platform on Food Waste and Loss renewed their commitment to work together with all others in the food supply chain to reduce food waste. EuroCommerce actively participated in the preparation of cross-sectoral recommendations launched by the Commission at the conference. Speaking today, EuroCommerce Director-General Christian Verschueren underlined the need for a holistic approach to reducing food waste:

“Our sector’s positive contribution to reducing food waste needs to be matched by action from public authorities if it is to be as effective as possible. We need decision-makers to make the legal position and tax treatment of donations of food a lot clearer and more favourable in order to create the right conditions for wholesome food which cannot be sold to get to people who can benefit most from it.”

The retail sector has actively driven sustainability issues through voluntary action at company or national and European level, such as the 2012 Retail Agreement on Waste and the resolution of the Consumer Goods Forum, under which leading food companies and retailers pledged to halve the amount of food wasted within their operations by 2025. Several retailers have also taken part in the EU-funded [REFRESH project](#).

Retail and wholesale accounts for less than 5% of total food waste along the food supply chain, but is nevertheless working hard with all stakeholders, including consumers, to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals, supported by the European Union, to halve waste by 2030. These already include actions also covered by the Commission’s sectoral recommendations, in particular:

- working with upstream partners by optimising merchandise planning and storage, logistics and delivery;
- managing food waste in shops;
- engaging with consumers through information campaigns.

As food waste has undeniable environmental, social but also economic consequences, our sector takes this issue very seriously. Cost of food waste and markdowns for European retail is estimated to be some €13 billion, or 1.6 % of total sales, so there are both commercial and environmental win-win in tackling the problem effectively.

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EuroCommerce is the principal European organisation representing the retail and wholesale sector. It embraces national associations in 31 countries and 5.4 million companies, both leading global players such as Carrefour, Ikea, Metro and Tesco, and many small businesses. Retail and wholesale provide a link between producers and 500 million European consumers over a billion times a day. It generates 1 in 7 jobs, providing a varied career for 29 million Europeans, many of them young people. It also supports millions of further jobs throughout the supply chain, from small local suppliers to international businesses. EuroCommerce is the recognised European social partner for the retail and wholesale sector.